Ctg port introduces digital payment for vehicle access

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, *Ctg*

It was a pleasant experience for drivers of cargo and container-carrying vehicles to gain much quicker entry to Chattogram port yesterday as the port authorities introduced a digital payment system for access through all eight gates.

For Mohammad Arafat, a prime mover driver who transports containers between the privately run off-dock KDS Logistics and the port, entering the port had been full of hassles and time-consuming for years.

Previously, he had to wait in long queues long before arriving near any gate.

"And upon arrival at the gate, it would take at least 15 to 20 minutes to complete the payment and data entries manually to get the gate pass," he said.

"With the new system, my helper spent at most three to four minutes to get the pass," he added.

Safirur Rahman, an executive of the off-dock who was on duty at the gate, said they were now able to pay the entry fee in advance through mobile financial services like bKash using a software application of the port.

Upon payment, they print the acknowledgment slip, Rahman said, adding that by entering the required information of the driver, vehicle, and payment into the software, it takes only a minute to generate the gate pass, which includes a barcode.

The driver can immediately gain entry after the barcode is scanned by security guards, he said. The entry fee for each vehicle entering the port is Tk 57.50, and the amount has remained unchanged. CPA Chairman Rear Admiral SM Moniruzzaman inaugurated the online gate pass system at Gate 4 of the port yesterday.

He hoped that the newly introduced automated system would reduce processing time for vehicle entry and expedite container and cargo movement, as well as handling, to minimise vessel turnaround time at the country's largest seaport.

Chattogram port handles roughly 90 percent of Bangladesh's trade with the rest of the world.

The port chairman said the manual payment process previously took an average of 20 minutes, resulting in long queues at

A newly introduced automated system for the entry of vehicles into the Chattogram port would reduce processing time and expedite container and cargo movement. The photo was taken at Gate 3 of the port yesterday.
PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

all eight gates and creating congestion on the approach roads to the port.

"With the new system, a vehicle can enter the port in a minute or two through the scanning of the online payment receipt, as drivers can pay the fee in advance through mobile financial services," he said.

The CPA launched trial operations of the electronic payment system for gate passes in November last year.

The online gate pass system has been developed by Navis LLC, a US-based global technology company.

DataSoft Systems Bangladesh Limited is working as the technical support partner for this system and has integrated it into the port's Terminal Operating System (TOS).

In 2012, Chattogram port began adopting

digitalisation in its processes with the introduction of a Computerised Container Terminal Management System (CTMS). Later, the system was upgraded to the TOS.

The CPA chairman said data on approximately 100,000 vehicles and biometric records of 100,000 drivers have been incorporated into the system so that authorities can efficiently track and monitor the movement of cargo vehicles.

Every day, around 6,000 to 8,000 vehicles, including trucks, covered vans, and container-carrying prime movers, enter the port. DataSoft Deputy CEO Nilufa Yasmin hoped that the new system would streamline port activities.

A driver coming from any part of the country can monitor how much time he has to reach the entry gate by using the application on his mobile phone, she said.

Moreover, the authorities can easily track the location of the vehicle and the container it is carrying, she added.

Hailing the initiative, Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association Vice President Khairul Alam Suzan said the introduction of the online payment system for gate passes was certainly a milestone towards the implementation of paperless documentation in all import and export procedures.

Currently, over 18 import documents are processed manually for the release of imported cargo from the port, while over five documents are processed physically for exports at the off-docks, he said.

The new system would surely expedite cargo and container movement, prevent pilferage, and reduce security risks, he opined.

Summit Power's profit jumped 51% in 2024

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Summit Power Ltd, a major private electricity producer, reported a significant increase in its profit for 2024, thanks to reduced volatility in the exchange rate.

Summit said its consolidated EPS increased by 51.2 percent this financial year compared to last year, primarily due to the significantly higher heavy fuel oil (HFO) cost relative to HFO revenue in the previous year.

This was driven by the sharp appreciation of the US dollar against the Bangladeshi taka, which resulted in higher import costs.

"As this impact was relatively lower in the current year, the EPS has increased," it said in a disclosure to the Dhaka Stock Exchange yesterday.

The company posted a profit of Tk 334.24 crore in the year ended June 30, 2024, marking a 51 percent year-on-year increase.

> The company posted a profit of Tk 334.24 crore in the year that ended on June 30, 2024

Buoyed by the positive earnings, shares of the company remained an identical 3.07 percent to Tk 16.30 in the last trading on the DSE yesterday.

Its consolidated earnings per share (EPS) rose to Tk 3.13 from Tk 2.07 in the previous year, according to the disclosure.

The board of directors has recommended a 10 percent cash dividend for the year, the same as in the previous year.

The company's consolidated net asset value per share stood at Tk 41.44 as of June 30, 2024, up from Tk 38.02 a year ago.

However, its consolidated net operating cash flow per share declined to Tk 6.13 from Tk 7.04 over the same period.

Shipping Corp's profit rises 7% in Q2

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) saw its profit rise in the second quarter of the 2024–25 fiscal year as factors such as seaport expansions and private sector participation boosted its earnings.

The state-owned company reported a profit of Tk 53.69 crore in the October–December quarter, marking a 7 percent year-on-year increase.

The company's share price rose 0.68 percent to Tk 88.6 in mid-day trading yesterday at the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE).

Its earnings per share (EPS) stood at Tk 3.52 for October–December 2024, up from Tk 3.29 in the same period a year ago, according to a disclosure on the DSE website.

For the first half of the fiscal year, the company's EPS rose to Tk 9.35, compared to Tk 6.59 in the corresponding period of FY24.

The company attributed the increase in earnings to initiatives taken by the shipping ministry to facilitate international passenger ship operations.

Policy guidance, supervision, and feasibility studies for an international cruise terminal are among the measures aimed at expanding the sector.

BSC also highlighted the expansion of seaports and technological advancements, including private sector participation, as key drivers of revenue growth in international shipping.

Its net operating cash flow per share stood at Tk 20.1 for July–December 2024, up from Tk 15.84 a year earlier.

Established in 1972, BSC plays a key role in Bangladesh's shipping industry, supporting the country's trade through its fleet of vessels.

Poultry growers should cut carbon footprint: analysts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's poultry producers should focus on reducing their carbon footprint to address the challenges posed by climate change, industry analysts said yesterday.

At the 13th International Poultry Seminar 2025, organised by the Bangladesh branch of the World's Poultry Science Association (WPSA-BB), experts emphasised the need to prioritise recycling.

Greater importance should be given to improving waste management in poultry farms, and authorities should not grant registration to any farm that lacks a waste management system, according to a press release by the organiser.

Moshiur Rahaman, president of the Bangladesh branch of WPSA, stressed the importance of addressing nutritional deficiencies in the country at the two-day event, which was themed "Sustainable Poultry for Emerging Bangladesh."

"We want to see Bangladesh free from malnutrition," he said at the opening of the event at the Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka.

From farm to plate, the entire poultry value chain should be brought under proper management, said WPSA-BB Secretary Biplab Kumar Pramanik.

Uber says it saved 1.1m hours for local commuters in 2024

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Uber helped commuters in Bangladesh save an estimated 1.1 million hours in travel time in 2024, a benefit valued at Tk 94 crore in monetary terms, according to an economic impact report released on Monday.

The report, compiled by UK-based research firm Public First, highlighted Uber's overall contribution of Tk 5,500 crore to the country's economy last year.

It also underscored Uber's role in facilitating efficient transportation, improving earnings for driver-partners, and boosting tourism.

Uber's Moto and Auto services alone accounted for Tk 920 crore in economic activity, reflecting the increasing demand for affordable and convenient last-mile connectivity.

Uber has emerged as a key source of income for many, with driver-partners earning 42 percent more annually compared to alternative jobs.

The platform also played a role in the tourism sector, contributing Tk 290 crore to the industry in 2023.

Additionally, the report found that a large portion of Uber's riders rely on the service for their daily commute. According to the report, 82 percent of riders

use Uber to travel to and from work.

Furthermore, 81 percent believe booking an Uber is more convenient than hailing a ride on the street, and 86 percent consider the app an important transportation innovation.

Safety and accessibility also remain significant factors in Uber's growing popularity. The report found that 95 percent of female riders prioritise safety when choosing Uber, while 89 percent consider Uber the safest way to travel home.

READ MORE ON B2

Tesla begins hiring in India

AFP, *Mumbai*

Electric vehicle maker Tesla has begun hiring in India, with the company of tycoon Elon Musk issuing advertisements days after US President Donald Trump's right-hand man met with India's premier.

Tesla has more than a dozen job listings on its website, for both the capital New Delhi and economic hub Mumbai, including for a store manager and service technicians.

The job listings were posted on the employment website LinkedIn on Monday.

Tesla's India push comes after Musk met one-on-one with Prime Minister Narenda Modi in Washington, raising questions over whether the world's richest man was meeting the Indian leader in an official or business capacity.

Musk has been seeking business opportunities in the world's most populous nation, with media reports last year suggesting it was scouting for factory and showroom locations.

Musk has also sought to open his satellite internet service Starlink in India, with communications minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in November saying the company would be allowed to operate if it complies with "security" regulations.

The potential launch of Starlink -- with its network of low Earth orbit satellites capable of providing internet to remote and disconnected locations -- in the world's most populous country has been accompanied by fierce policy debates and alleged national security concerns.

Musk was due to visit India in 2024, following suggestions that he would announce major investment plans, but later cancelled the trip due to what he said were "very heavy Tesla obligations".

Musk launches 'scary smart' AI chatbot

AFP, *San Francisco*

Elon Musk's artificial intelligence company unveiled on Monday the latest version of its chatbot, Grok 3, which the billionaire hopes will find traction in a highly competitive sector contested by the likes of ChatGPT and China's DeepSeek.

The launch comes as the world's richest man is deploying the enormous powers granted him by US President Donald Trump to restructure and dismantle federal agencies.

The unprecedented cost-cutting drive has raised conflict-of-interest questions, given that many of those agencies have regulatory oversight on elements of Musk's sprawling business empire.

"Grok is to understand the universe," Musk said at the start of the Grok 3 launch presentation.

"We're driven by curiosity about the nature of the universe -- that's also what causes us to be a maximally truth-seeking AI, even if that truth is sometimes at odds with what is politically correct."

Musk has promoted Grok 3 as "scary smart," with 10 times the computational resources of its predecessor that was released in August last year.

The flagship product of his xAI

company was trained on synthetic data and employs self-correction mechanisms that avoid errors -- known as "hallucinations" -- that plague some AI chatbots and lead them to process false or misleading data as fact.

This photograph taken on January 13 in Toulouse shows screens displaying the logo of Grok, a generative artificial intelligence chatbot developed by xAI, an American company specialising in artificial intelligence.
PHOTO: AFP

"Grok 3 has very powerful reasoning capabilities, so in the tests that we've done thus far, Grok 3 is outperforming anything that's been released, that we're aware of, so that's a good sign," Musk said in a video call last week with the World

Governments Summit in Dubai.

Grok 3 will be made available first to Premium+ paid subscribers of X -- formerly Twitter, which Musk acquired in 2022 -- before rolling out to other users.

The upgraded chatbot enters a crowded field with countries racing to introduce more sophisticated -- and cost-effective -- AI products.

Chinese startup DeepSeek shocked the global AI industry last month with the launch of its low-cost, high-quality R1 chatbot -- a direct challenge to US ambitions to lead the world in developing the technology.

Grok 3 is also going up against OpenAI's chatbot, ChatGPT -- pitting Musk against collaborator-turned-arch rival Sam Altman.

Musk and Altman were among the 11-person team that founded OpenAI in 2015. Created as a counterweight to Google's dominance in artificial intelligence, the project got its initial funding from Musk, who invested $45 million to get it started.

Musk left three years later, and then in 2022 OpenAI's release of ChatGPT created a global technology sensation -- one that did not feature Musk at its center and which made Altman a star.