

INSIDE UBER’S OPERATIONS IN BANGLADESH

A chat with Nashid Ferdous Kamal

Since its launch in Bangladesh in 2016, the global ride-sharing platform Uber has significantly influenced the country’s mobility landscape. A recently unveiled report, compiled by UK-based research firm Public First, highlighted Uber’s overall contribution of BDT 5,500 crore to the country’s economy last year.



Nashid Ferdous Kamal, Country Head, Uber Bangladesh

ZARIF FAIAZ

The Daily Star sat down with Nashid Ferdous Kamal, Country Head, Uber Bangladesh, and Amy Price, Director - Head of Tech, Media and Telecoms Practice at Public First, to discuss Uber’s economic and social impact, responses to safety challenges and debates facing the gig economy, and the future of ride-sharing in Bangladesh.

THE DAILY STAR (DS): *Uber recently launched an economic impact report in Bangladesh. Can you share some key highlights from the report?*

AMY PRICE: We were really excited to take on this project because it’s important to assess not only the consumer benefits of Uber but also its broader economic impact. The report estimates that Uber contributed BDT 55 billion to the Bangladesh economy in a single year.

DS: *What’s next in this transformation journey? Are there plans to introduce new services like Uber Bus, which has been launched in many other cities around the world?*

NASHID: Innovation remains at our core. Right now, our priority is strengthening our existing services and expanding into more cities beyond Dhaka.

We have introduced multiple ride categories to cater to different consumer needs, and our next steps involve enhancing the customer experience and scaling our operations. Bringing in new services like Uber Bus is something we’re always evaluating, but our current focus is on improving reliability and safety.

DS: *Many users have raised safety concerns about Uber rides these days, with reports of drivers behaving inappropriately. How does Uber*

Uber?

NASHID: It depends on the situation. If a security issue or a serious incident occurs, then yes, we provide relevant data to assist authorities. But in general, our role is to balance safety, privacy, and compliance with legal



Amy Price, Director - Head of Tech, Media and Telecoms Practice at Public First

requirements.

DS: *The report mentions that 89% of riders feel that Uber is the safest way to travel home. Is there similar data for drivers?*

AMY: While we didn’t ask that exact question in our survey, we did find that over 60% of drivers prefer driving through Uber over street hailing. They see benefits in terms of security, reliability, and steady earnings.

NASHID: Also, the safety features that protect riders—like GPS tracking and trip insurance—apply to drivers as well. Unlike offline rides, where neither party is covered, Uber ensures that both riders and drivers are protected in case of an incident.

DS: *Despite Uber’s efforts, we still see many drivers engaging in street hailing, bypassing the app. How does Uber address this issue?*

NASHID: We actively discourage offline rides because they compromise security for both riders and drivers. When trips are tracked on the app, there’s a record of the ride, the fare is transparent, and both parties are protected.

We conduct training and awareness programs for drivers to highlight the risks of offline trips. But addressing this issue requires a collaborative effort—from drivers, riders, and policymakers alike.

DS: *Does Uber provide formal training to drivers before onboarding them?*

NASHID: Uber drivers are independent partners, not employees, so we don’t mandate formal training. However, we regularly communicate guidelines, safety measures, and community standards to ensure they understand the best practices.

DS: *In some global markets, Uber has faced legal challenges over whether drivers should*

be classified as employees or independent contractors. Do you see this debate happening in Bangladesh?

NASHID: The gig economy thrives on flexibility. Our drivers are free to choose when and how much they want to work, which wouldn’t be possible if they were employees with fixed shifts.

Rather than focusing on classification, I think the bigger discussion should be on improving working conditions and benefits for gig workers, ensuring they get the best possible earnings and protections while maintaining their independence.

DS: *In Bangladesh, competition in ride-sharing is still relatively low. How does Uber prevent monopolistic practices?*

NASHID: We encourage healthy competition because it benefits the entire ecosystem—riders get better services, and drivers have more opportunities. The ride-sharing industry is still growing, and we welcome more players to drive innovation and service quality.

DS: *Cash payments remain dominant in Bangladesh, even though Uber supports digital transactions. Do you have plans to shift towards cashless payments?*

NASHID: Digital payments are an important focus, but adoption has been slow because many drivers aren’t comfortable with the adjustment process. We’re working on solutions to make digital transactions easier and more accessible for them.

DS: *Nashid, a question directed at you. You took over as Country Head in January 2024. How has your first year been?*

NASHID: It’s been a rollercoaster ride—from handling economic shifts and driver protests to launching the economic impact report. Balancing growth and operational challenges has been both exciting and demanding.

A big part of my role has been understanding customer pain points, directly engaging with drivers, and adapting Uber to local needs.

DS: *Have you encountered any unique operational challenges in Bangladesh compared to other markets?*

NASHID: Absolutely. Bangladesh is a unique market in many ways. The pace of digital transformation, the high population density, and evolving regulatory policies create both challenges and opportunities.

What excites me is the sheer potential—Bangladesh is embracing ride-sharing at an incredible rate, and we want to keep building on that momentum.

DS: *Thank you for giving time to our readers.*

NASHID: Thank you.

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Minimum experience: 2-5 years

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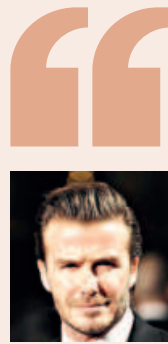
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“I have always believed that if you want to achieve anything special in life you have to work, work, and then work some more.”

DAVID BECKHAM

How to stay productive at work while fasting

SHARTAJ AZIZ HOSSAIN

Fasting during Ramadan for spiritual reasons is a deeply rewarding experience, but it can also be challenging when balancing a full day of work. Between low energy, dehydration, and an unpredictable sleep schedule, staying focused and productive can feel like an uphill battle. However, with some smart strategies, you can manage your workload effectively without burning out.

One of the best ways to maintain productivity while fasting is to plan your workday around your energy levels. Right after Sehri, the morning time is when you are likely to feel the most refreshed and alert. This is the ideal time to tackle the most important and mentally demanding tasks. As the day progresses and fatigue starts setting in, save routine or easier tasks for the afternoon.

Using a planner or a to-do list can help you stay on track without overwhelming yourself. Working smarter, not harder, is key during this time. Focusing on priority tasks first helps avoid last-minute stress, and breaking big projects into smaller, manageable steps can make them feel less daunting. Whenever possible, automating repetitive tasks or delegating work to others can lighten your workload and prevent exhaustion.

Leveraging technology can also make a huge difference in managing your energy throughout the day. Productivity tools like Notion, Asana, or Google Calendar can help keep your tasks organised, while automation apps like Zapier or Microsoft Power

Automate can handle repetitive work for you. AI-powered assistants like ChatGPT can be useful for quick research, drafting emails, or summarising information efficiently. Additionally, opting for video calls instead of in-person meetings can help conserve energy.

“By planning meals wisely, staying active, and optimising sleep, professionals can maintain their focus and efficiency even while fasting,” says Farhana Preeti, AVP of Business Development at Shaigjoj Limited. According to her, a well-balanced Sehri, rich in protein, fibre, and complex carbohydrates, provides sustained energy, while proper hydration between Iftar and Sehri is essential for overall well-being. She also advises against consuming sugary or fried foods, as they can lead to sluggishness and reduced focus.

Taking breaks and allowing yourself to recharge is just as important as managing your workload. Short breaks can be used to stretch, take a quick walk, or practice breathing exercises. The Pomodoro technique—working for 25 minutes and then taking a 5-minute break—can help maintain productivity while preventing burnout. If your workplace allows, a quick power nap of 15-20 minutes can be incredibly refreshing.

Optimising your workspace and using smart productivity hacks can further enhance focus. Keeping your desk clutter-free minimises distractions, while apps like Forest or Brain.fm can create an environment conducive to concentration. Pre-written email templates can save time on routine



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

communications, allowing you to work more efficiently.

Ayman Sadiq, CEO of 10 Minute School, shared his tips for staying productive during Ramadan: “Adjust your desk and chair height for better posture and position your laptop and mouse ergonomically to avoid strain. And most importantly, no multitasking—focus on deep work to maximise efficiency.”

Handling meetings and communication wisely is another crucial aspect of maintaining productivity while fasting. Important meetings should be scheduled

in the morning when your energy and concentration levels are higher. Keeping emails and discussions brief helps conserve energy, and using voice notes instead of long text messages can be a time-saver. Collaboration tools like Slack, Trello, or Microsoft Teams streamline communication, making work more manageable.

Staying positive and motivated throughout the fasting period can make a significant difference. Reminding yourself of the spiritual purpose behind fasting helps reinforce discipline and patience. Practising

gratitude can improve your mindset, and celebrating small wins—like completing tasks on time despite fasting—will keep you motivated.

For those dealing with traffic jams during their commute, planning ahead can reduce stress. If remote work or flexible hours are an option, they can help avoid unnecessary travel fatigue. Keeping water and light snacks handy in case you're stuck in traffic at Iftar time is a practical solution, and using navigation apps to plan your route can help you avoid heavily congested areas.

Many professionals who fast say that adjusting their sleep schedule is key to staying productive. Some prefer handling complex tasks in the morning and leaving creative work for the evening when they feel more relaxed. Health experts also recommend light physical activity, such as short walks, to keep blood circulation going. Experienced professionals advise setting realistic daily goals and avoiding an overloaded schedule—fasting is a time for balance, not burnout.

At the end of the day, fasting and work can go hand in hand with the right approach. By staying organised, working smart, and taking care of your health, you can navigate your workday efficiently without feeling overwhelmed. The key is to pace yourself, stay mindful of your energy levels, and remember that you don't have to do everything simultaneously. Work smart, not hard, and you'll end your day feeling accomplished.