

EMPOWERING

Communities with Essential Savings Knowledge



SELIM R. F. HUSSAIN
Managing Director & CEO
BRAC Bank

The Daily Star (TDS): Could you provide an overview of the current customer deposit and savings situation at your bank?

Selim R. F. Hussain (SRFH): As of September 2024, BRAC Bank recorded a 34% annualised growth, reflecting the deep trust customers place in the institution. By October, its retail deposit portfolio exceeded BDT 30,000 crore, driven by a wide range of products tailored to varied customer needs. Savings accounts, fixed deposits, and interest-bearing options, coupled with digital banking innovations, have accelerated deposit mobilisation. With eKYC and the Astha App, customers can now open accounts, including DPS and FDR, anytime, from anywhere, ensuring convenience and financial accessibility.

TDS: What are the top savings schemes that you are currently offering?

SRFH: BRAC Bank offers a comprehensive range of deposit and savings products tailored to meet the diverse financial needs of its customers. The Triple Benefits Savings Account delivers an attractive interest rate, helping customers grow their deposits more effectively. For younger savers, the Future Star Account is designed to build financial awareness among children under 18. Operated by their legal guardians, it includes engaging features to encourage early saving habits.

The Golden Benefits Savings Account provides senior citizens with exclusive privileges, while other products—such as the TARA Golden Benefits Savings Account, Happy Savers Account, and TARA Happy Savers Account—offer simplified savings schemes that help customers plan for future financial goals

with ease.

To meet international banking requirements, the Resident Foreign Currency Deposit (RFCD) Account enables customers to manage foreign currency from anywhere. The Foreign Currency (FCY) Account for NRIs allows expatriates to manage their foreign income reliably.

For those seeking interest-free banking, the MUKTI and TARA MUKTI Current Accounts are designed for high-net-worth individuals preferring Shariah-compliant and fee-waived options. BRAC Bank also serves freelancers and mariners with specialised accounts, including USD options, offering global flexibility and convenience.

TDS: What initiatives has your bank taken to encourage the savings habit among the general public?

SRFH: BRAC Bank actively promotes a savings culture through diverse financial literacy initiatives. As the lead bank in Bangladesh Bank's School Banking Conference in different districts, BRAC Bank educates students on banking services and instils early saving habits among them. The bank also conducts deposit campaigns and roadshows at universities and corporate offices, encouraging corporate professionals and students to adopt disciplined saving practices. Financial literacy programmes like 'Uthan Boithak' are conducted through its 1,100+ agent banking outlets nationwide.

TDS: What innovative steps have been implemented at your bank to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

SRFH: The Astha digital banking app enables customers to open FDR and DPS accounts online, streamlining the savings process. Furthermore, the introduction of electronic Know Your Customer (eKYC) procedures allows expatriate Bangladeshis to open accounts remotely. In collaboration with bKash, BRAC Bank offers micro-savings options, encouraging regular saving habits with minimal initial investments. These initiatives collectively foster a robust savings culture across various population segments.

TDS: What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products at your bank?

SRFH: BRAC Bank aims for over 30% deposit growth in 2025, building on its strong past performance. To achieve this, it will launch tailored savings schemes to reach diverse customer segments and promote financial inclusion. Digital innovation remains key, with continued investment in platforms like the Astha app to ensure accessible, customer-friendly banking across Bangladesh.

CLIENT TRUST POWERS

Our Deposit Growth



MOHAMMAD ALI
Managing Director & CEO
Pubali Bank

Pension Scheme, Senior Citizen Programme, and Swadhin Sanchay Swapno, make up the remaining 20% of Pubali Bank's deposit portfolio.

TDS: What initiatives have your bank taken to encourage savings habits among the general people?

MA: There has been considerable innovation in savings. At the retail level, we introduced an automated payroll system for garment workers, resulting in a diverse range of savings. Corporate transactions have also been automated, enabling companies to transact directly from their premises and contributing to deposit growth. Agent banking has brought in substantial retail deposits. In 2024, we launched merchant acquiring, attracting nearly BDT 1,000 crore in deposits. Through technological platforms like batch transactions, BFTN, RTGS, and e-GP, we have extended services to the grassroots, driving automatic deposit growth.

TDS: What innovative steps have been implemented to make savings products more convenient and accessible for all kinds of customers?

MA: We are observing a strong presence of large corporates with our bank. Our vast branch network supports their supply chain, sales, and marketing operations, including the management of dealers and distributors across the country, giving us a competitive advantage. Our strong online network has also simplified transactions among distributors, dealers, and suppliers, particularly for industries and MNCs.

TDS: What are your future plans regarding the enhancement and expansion of savings products?

MA: Technological innovation is now our major area of focus, and we are placing special emphasis on the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across all operations—whether it is in the prevention of money laundering, deposit management, customer decision-making, or the development of loan and advance products. This is truly the age of Artificial Intelligence, and we are committed to leading in this transformation. For each product—be it related to financing, deposits, or security—we are working to integrate AI solutions. We are deploying world-leading AI tools in our data centres for disaster recovery, network management, and enhancing customer convenience through chatbots and robotic communications. We must also train our officials in AI tools and ensure their active implementation to deliver lifelong value to our customers.

RAINY DAYS AND RETIREMENT:

Why Savings Matter More Than Ever



AYMAN ANIKA

its elderly.

A system long in need of reform

Traditionally, Bangladesh has relied on family-based elder care, but this safety net is rapidly weakening due to urban migration, shrinking family units, and economic pressures. While government officials and public sector employees receive structured pensions, this covers only a small portion of the elderly population.

In response, the Universal Pension Scheme has been launched.

Introduced in 2023, the Universal Pension Scheme aims to provide structured retirement support for everyone, including formal and informal sector workers. With modules like Probas, Progoti, Surakha, and Samata, the scheme encourages citizens aged 18-50 to make monthly contributions and receive lifelong pension payouts after turning 60. Yet while promising, this programme's long-term success hinges on deep-rooted behavioural and institutional change.

As Bangladesh witnesses a demographic shift with an increasing elderly population, the conversation around savings and pensions has become more critical than ever. In response, the Government of Bangladesh introduced the Old Age Allowance (OAA) programme in the 1997-1998 fiscal year to support low-income senior citizens. As of the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the monthly allowance has increased to Tk 600 per person, benefiting approximately 5.8 million elderly individuals.

So, here is how Bangladesh is reimagining the financial security of

Banks step up: New schemes, new mindsets

Banks are increasingly filling the pension gap with innovative savings products tailored for elderly customers.

Midland Bank: The family support model

Md Rashed Akter, Head of Retail Distribution at Midland Bank, emphasises a practical problem faced by retirees: "After retirement, if you do an FDR, you'll only get the money at maturity. But monthly expenses need to be met regularly. That's why we designed the Family Support Scheme—it allows people to earn monthly returns from a fixed deposit, helping them manage recurring costs."

Midland has also extended its savings tenure from three to up to 20 years for long-term planners. For first-time savers or low-income groups, the bank offers a Tk 250 DPS—a rare nano-savings model.

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