

How female leaders are shaping a new era in banking

Across Bangladesh's financial landscape, a decisive revolution is underway where women are shaping the rules, questioning traditional systems, and introducing leadership styles grounded in empathy, resilience, and most importantly, inclusivity. The banking sector is gradually becoming multidimensional, thanks to subtle changes: an inclusive maternity policy here, a shift in customer communication there, and the impact is substantial. At the centre of this evolution are women in roles from branch managers to C-suites, who are bravely navigating a world not designed for them, but they are rebuilding it with more nuance and ambition than ever before.

A childhood of circuits and curiosity
For Nurun Nahar Begum, now the Chief Technology Officer of BRAC Bank PLC, the journey into the banking world began with light bulbs, radios and circuit breakers.

Begum's fascination with technology began when it was far from accessible and computers were rare. She had a personal computer at home

by the early nineties, and the machine changed the direction of her academic life. Although Begum completed her Master's in Finance and Banking, she realised she needed to study more about technology. She went on to complete a year-long programming diploma at a time when few women in Bangladesh even knew what programming meant.

In every respect, her family supported her. "I never heard anyone in my family say you cannot do this or that. They simply told me to study diligently and do something with my life," she shares.

And when Begum joined BRAC Bank, it was already fully digitised.

"I am not great at sales, and when I joined the bank, I had the option to choose a branch role or move into technology. I am a problem solver, and like understanding things end-to-end, so I chose technology, as it allows me to do that," she elaborates.

Begum started her career from the lowest grade, and now, she holds the highest: the Division Head. Her decisions have impacted the bank's digital journey. And her leadership? It



Women are transforming Bangladesh's banking sector with leadership rooted in empathy, resilience, and inclusivity.

Pioneers like Nurun Nahar Begum (CTO of BRAC Bank) are reshaping technology-driven roles, while Sarmin Atik (EVP, Eastern Bank) highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership.

Ummya Rahman (SVP, bKash) is redefining brand strategy in fintech, focusing on behavioural science and consumer insights.

These women are not only leading but actively rewriting the culture of banking, fostering collaboration and inclusivity, proving women can lead in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

has certainly opened doors for women who rarely envisioned themselves in tech.

A path to banking, not by design

In another corner of Bangladesh's banking universe sits Sarmin Atik, Executive Vice President and Head of Liability and Wealth Management at Eastern Bank Limited.

"My father was a banker, so maybe that planted an early seed. But I never planned on becoming a banker," Atik shares. Though she stepped into the industry by chance, here she discovered

purpose.

Atik began her journey 21 years ago, and back then, women in leadership were rare. However, today, she sees the shift clearly. So, what might the changes be?

"If you ask me, I would say that now women in banking are more active, focused, and balanced. We support one another, and that solidarity has transformed our presence," she answers.

Yet, she sincerely acknowledges something often left unsaid.

"Without the support of the men in our lives, our fathers, husbands, and colleagues, many of our journeys would have been more difficult. I honestly believe that real progress is never one-sided. It happens when men and women move forward together," she says.

For Atik, real leadership means not having the loudest voice in the room but creating more voices around her. For her, emotional intelligence carries the utmost importance, not as a soft add-on, but as a core financial tool.

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