WALLET 2.0

Innovating for a smarter, cashless economy

PRIME BANK PLC

"Prime Bank continues to innovate digital services for all clients, recently launching a co-branded Visa card with Chittagong Port Authority to accelerate Bangladesh's transition toward a smarter, cashless economy."

M. NAZEEM A. CHOUDHURY
Additional Managing Director
Prime Bank PLC.

Bangladesh is moving rapidly toward a cashless economy and the change is becoming more visible every year. With the rapid expansion of digital banking services, mobile financial services (MFS), online shopping platforms and fintech innovations, people are now becoming more comfortable with digital transactions than ever before. M. Nazeem A. Choudhury, shares how the bank is pioneering innovation to accelerate this national transition.

The Daily Star (TDS): How is Bangladesh's journey toward a cashless economy evolving?
M. Nazeem A. Choudhury (MNAC): Digital financial services are becoming a daily essential in Bangladesh, supported by the government's "Cashless Bangladesh" vision and the introduction of Bangla QR for seamless, secure transactions. Prime Bank is advancing this shift through its "MyPrime" platform enabling 24/7 account management, transfers, and virtual card services and its "TapIn" sticker card for cardless payments. Together, the efforts of the government, banks, and fintech companies are enhancing financial transparency and inclusion, building a strong foundation for sustainable economic growth.

TDS: How is Prime Bank enhancing value for its cardholders this Eid season?
MNAC: Prime Bank has introduced a wide range of special offers and reward programs for its cardholders Prime Bank's Eid offers include free home delivery and 50% off meat processing at select cattle farms, plus up to BDT 10,000 cashback and 35% discounts on electronics, lifestyle, groceries, and e-commerce. Customers can also enjoy "Buy 1 Get up to 3" buffet deals at premium restaurants. Additionally, the bank recently launched "ZERO by Prime Bank," a minimal-charge Visa Signature Credit Card. Supporting the "Cashless Bangladesh" initiative, Prime Bank is also providing ATM, CRM, POS, and digital account services at this year's Digital Haat.

TDS: In what ways do these initiatives cultivate the habit of "smart spending" among consumers?
MNAC: Digital banking promotes smarter financial habits by offering real-time spending visibility, secure payments, and value-added rewards. Through instant notifications and transaction histories, consumers can monitor their expenses more effectively, while cashback and discounts maximize their purchasing power. By providing a safer and more convenient alternative to cash, these digital tools foster a responsible, digital-first mindset that leads to more informed and efficient financial decisions.

TDS: Looking ahead, how do you envision the future of festive spending?
MNAC: Future festive spending in Bangladesh will be increasingly digital and personalized, driven by AI and data analytics. Banks will use these tools to provide tailored promotions and spending recommendations based on individual behavior. As e-commerce and contactless payments expand, smartphone-based transactions and installment options are set to replace cash as the primary method for Eid shopping.

Seamless banking for the Eid rush

BRAC BANK PLC

"During the festive season, stay alert for sophisticated phishing and fake calls; avoid sharing personal details publicly. If you notice suspicious activity or lose your card, contact customer care immediately for prompt action."

MD. MAHIUL ISLAM
Deputy Managing Director &
Head of Retail Banking
BRAC Bank PLC.

While economic pressures are leading to more value-conscious spending this Eid-ul-Adha, the transition to digital banking continues to accelerate. Md. Mahiul Islam, DMD & Head of Retail Banking at BRAC Bank, discusses how platforms like the Astha app are reshaping consumer habits and how the bank is deploying innovative tools to ensure a secure, seamless festive experience.

The Daily Star (TDS): How do you expect overall consumer spending in Bangladesh to behave during this Eid-ul-Adha season compared with last year?
Md. Mahiul Islam (MMI): Eid-ul-Adha spending is expected to grow moderately rather than seeing a sharp rebound. Rising global energy and commodity prices have outpaced income growth, squeezing household budgets. Additionally, private sector credit growth has hit a 21-year low, dampening business activity and weakening consumer confidence.

TDS: What major trends are you seeing in Eid-related digital transactions, such as card payments, mobile financial services, and online transfers?
Eid spending is shifting toward planned, digital-first behaviour as consumers increasingly utilize cashback and instalment offers. This trend is driven by e-commerce and mobile apps like BRAC Bank's Astha, which in 2025 processed Tk 237,000 crorefor over 1.2 million customers. With monthly volumes now at Tk 24,000 crore, the app handles more than half of the bank's total digital transactions.

TDS: How are banks preparing to support the seasonal rise in cash withdrawals, digital payments, and customer demand during Eid?
MMI: At BRAC Bank, ATM booths are adequately stocked to meet heightened cash demand and 24/7 operational support throughout the festive period. To enhance customer convenience during Eid, selected cardholders also enjoy up to a 50% waiver on bKash wallet transfer fees.

TDS: What role can banks play in making Eid travel, shopping, and Qurbani-related payments safer and more convenient for customers?
MMI: Eid compresses a large volume of financial activity into a very short period, significantly increasing transaction flows and, with it, the risk of fraud.
To manage high Eid transaction volumes and fraud risks, BRAC Bank is introducing a Smart POS device. Supporting both card and QR payments, it provides instant voice confirmation for every successful transaction, ensuring immediate and secure verification for both merchants and customers.

TDS: From a banking perspective, what financial hygiene or safety tips should customers follow while spending during Eid?
MMI: To ensure financial security, never share your PIN, OTP, or CVV, as banks will never ask for them. Cover the keypad at ATMs or POS terminals and monitor your transaction history regularly to detect fraud early.

The tap that redefines tradition

Digital spending now dominates lifestyle, groceries, and cattle markets, replacing risky cash handling. This shift eliminates counterfeit threats while fueling a secure and resilient economy.

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This "planned spending" is most visible in the electronics sector. Eid-ul-Adha is the unofficial season for refrigerators and ACs. To manage cash flow, consumers are flocking to Equated Monthly Installment (EMI) facilities. Banks and retailers are offering 0% interest EMIs and exclusive discounts for cardholders. Syed Mohammad Kamal, Country Manager of Mastercard Bangladesh, explained that the festive economy is transitioning from cash purchases to more structured and rewarding digital transactions. By opting for EMIs, the middle class can upgrade their homes without a massive immediate hit to their savings.

THE RURAL SHIFT
A pivotal driver of this digital surge is the unprecedented expansion of agent banking, which has evolved from a deposit-collection tool into a vital credit lifeline for the rural economy. According to Bangladesh Bank (BB) data, agent banking outlets have surged to over 20,501 across the country, and the total amount of deposits through agent banking reached Tk 49,720 crore at the end of December 2025. This infrastructure ensures that money is distributed faster than ever; when a buyer in Dhaka scans a QR code at a cattle market, the funds are instantly reflected in the farmer's formal account. By bypassing the risks of physical cash and "fake note" scams, these digital rails are integrating the unbanked into the formal financial sector at a record pace.

This transition is further fueled by a sharp rise in rural demand. BB reports that credit disbursement through agent banking has seen a significant year-on-year expansion as rural borrowers increasingly seek formal loans to scale livestock production ahead of the festive season.By replacing the "shadow economy" of cash with a transparent, traceable flow of wealth, agent banking uplifts rural communities more efficiently than traditional spending, ultimately increasing the country's tax-to-GDP ratio.

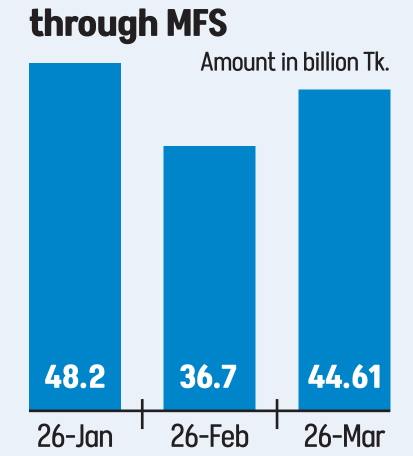
THE BATTLE FOR THE FESTIVAL WALLET SHARE
Competition among financial giants like bKash, Nagad, and commercial banks has intensified. Banks are moving beyond cash liquidity to "stress-readiness," ensuring that backend systems can handle the massive influx of festive transactions. BRAC Bank, for instance, has strengthened API integrations with MFS providers to allow 24/7 fund transfers, while Prime Bank's "ZERO" Visa card eliminates issuing and transfer fees to attract savvy spenders.

This digital shift is a massive win for the national economy. Digital spending has a higher "velocity of money," entering the formal banking system instantly. This allows for better economic tracking and a higher tax-to-GDP ratio. By reducing the reliance on cash, digital transactions during Eid 2026 are fueling faster infrastructure growth and financial inclusion.

While the ease of digital payments is undeniable, it requires high financial hygiene. Experts emphasize that sensitive information like PINs and OTPs should never be shared. As digital transactions rise, so does the risk of sophisticated phishing scams. "Cyber fraud tends to rise during Eid due to the sharp increase in digital volumes," warned Md. Mahiul Islam.

As we celebrate this Eid, the tap of a card or the scan of a phone is doing more than just buying a gift—it is powering a more transparent and resilient Bangladeshi economy.

QR code transactions through MFS

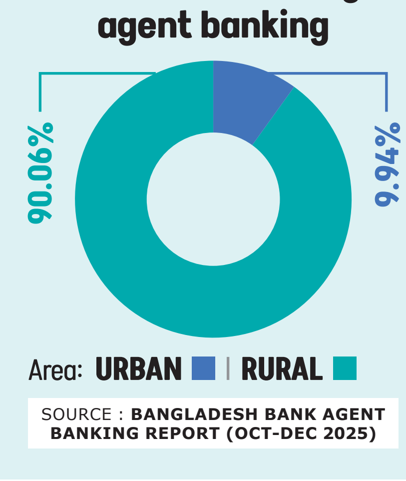


SOURCE: BANGLADESH BANK

Top 5 banks that have opened agent banking accounts:

1. Dutch Bangla Bank PLC
2. Bank Asia PLC
3. Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC
4. Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC
5. BRAC Bank PLC

Area-wise inward remittances through agent banking



SOURCE : BANGLADESH BANK AGENT BANKING REPORT (OCT-DEC 2025)