



Message from CHAIRMAN

Don't Kill Innovations, Boost Financial Inclusion

Finance Minister Mustafa Kamal has proposed fresh tariff on smart phones and smart cards of banks used by common consumers in the new national budget he announced on June 13 last in the parliament. Bankers, importers and consumers have already expressed their grave concerns over this high tariff saying that this will increase prices of mobile phones and smart cards nearly double and encourage influx of foreign products through unofficial channels. This ultimately will hit financial inclusion and the government's move towards a cashless society.

Mobile phone importers have expressed grave concern over the higher tariff on smart phone saying that this will discourage mobile banking operations in the country which needs to keep rapid digital transformation for reach the millennium goal. The association of Bankers also have expressed grave concern over the high tariff imposed on credit and debit cards. The cost for issuing new credit and debit cards will balloon 3-6 times as the government imposed fresh duty on the imported items in the new budget for fiscal 2019-20 unveiled on June 13.

Digital transformation is taking place on many fronts in the country's banking sector over the years thanks to pro-active role of the government under its Digital Bangladesh vision. Most younger consumers, low income people and service soldiers are using mobile apps, credit and debit cards in their shopping which reduce cash transactions, foster digital transactions, promote e-commerce and boost financial inclusion. So, this higher tariff on smart phone and smart card is a blow to the growth momentum, which ultimately will kill innovation and hit inclusive economic growth.

Bangladesh Mobile Financial Service industry is now a global success story with more than 56 million users across the country mostly who are poor and low income people. Its retail industry has taken a new shape with digital payment options. Customers, used to convenience and personalisation from retail and e-commerce, now seek the same multi-channel ease of use from their banks.

So, please don't kill innovations, boost financial inclusion, withdraw high tariffs on smart phone and smart cards.

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Bangladesh Journalists' Foundation For Consumers & Investors (BJFCI) is the largest platform of senior journalists working in leading dailies of Bangladesh. Its members are working as Editors, Executive Editors, Economic Editors, Business Editors, News Editors, Chief Reporters, Special Correspondents and Senior Reporters/Sub Editors and committed to protect the rights of consumers and interest of inclusive investors through media interventions. BJFCI raises voice for the rights of consumers and promotes growth finance sector, digital innovations and mobile financial services in line with its vision to build a fair financial society for a better Bangladesh with inclusive growth.