

In 2016, India pulled 86% of its cash out of circulation overnight.

It was a crisis. RBI turned it into a decade of infrastructure.

UPI. Digital Rupee. Revolut. Three moves that put India ahead of every South Asian neighbour in digital finance. Here is what Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka can learn.

Bangladesh doesn't need a crisis to act. It has India's playbook — right next door.

The crisis that accidentally built digital India.

On 8 November 2016, India removed 86% of cash from circulation overnight. It was chaotic. But it forced 1.4 billion people to find another way to pay.



Cash removed overnight

86% of circulation



Paytm traffic surge

+435% overnight



Paytm transactions

+250% in weeks



Cash returned to banks

99.3% — black money plan failed

The black money objective failed — 99.3% of banned notes returned to banks (RBI Annual Report 2018). But the digital adoption objective succeeded spectacularly. A crisis forced the infrastructure moment India needed.

The lesson for Bangladesh:

Don't wait for a crisis to build digital payment infrastructure. India had one forced on it. Bangladesh has the luxury of choosing its moment.

The world's largest real-time payment system.

UPI launched in 2016. By 2025, it processes more daily transactions than Visa — from a single country.



Annual transactions 2025

228 billion



Daily transactions

698 million — beats Visa



Share of retail payments

84% of India's total



Live internationally

8 countries · 30+ expanding



Banks on UPI

691 banks integrated

The lesson for Bangladesh:

bKash and Nagad are Bangladesh's UPI moment waiting to happen. The infrastructure exists. What is missing is a common interoperable rail — and a regulator willing to mandate it.

Testing the future. While others debate, India experiments.

RBI launched its Digital Rupee (e-Rupee) in 2022 and granted Revolut full PPI authorisation in April 2025. Two bets on the same vision — a programmable, interoperable, sovereign digital money stack.

Digital Rupee (e-Rupee) — by March 2025:

Users	6–8 million · 17–19 banks
In circulation	₹1,016 crore (~\$120M)
Use cases live	Farmer credits · Women welfare · Offline NFC
Global rank	2nd largest CBDC pilot globally

Revolut India — full PPI authorisation April 2025:

RBI authorisation	Full PPI — April 2025
India employees	3,500 — Revolut's largest globally
Launched to public	October 2025 · UPI + Visa card

RBI's approach: test with CBDC, welcome global neobanks under regulated licences, let the market find what works. Open, pragmatic, sovereign.

Three moves. Ten years. India's lead.

Use disruption as an accelerant

- 1 India's demonetisation crisis forced digital adoption. Bangladesh's FX crisis, reserve pressure, and informal USDT market are its equivalent signal. Act now — before a crisis forces it.

Build interoperable public rails

- 2 bKash and Nagad cannot remain walled gardens. Bangladesh Bank must mandate a common payment layer — Bangladesh's UPI — that works across all providers.

Test before you decide

- 3 RBI didn't legalise crypto — it ran a CBDC sandbox and approved Revolut under a PPI licence. Bangladesh Bank can do the same with stablecoins. Observe first. Regulate from evidence.

Full South Asia policy analysis:



Digital Money, Stablecoins & Monetary Sovereignty

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Which of RBI's three moves should Bangladesh Bank make first?

Drop your view ↓