

Smart Bangladesh

US President John F Kennedy made a historic speech in May 1961, urging the country to envision the landing of an American on the moon. He saw the invisible with a clear vision. Eight years later, the impossible was achieved, with **Neil Armstrong** setting foot on the moon.

'Only those who can see the invisible can do the impossible.' - This quote has been attributed to a number of people, including **Albert Einstein**, who needs no introduction, and **Bernard Lown**, who invented the first heart defibrillator, among others. It basically implies that, to do something deemed impossible, one needs a farsighted vision of something beyond today's reality.

A decade ago, when **Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** declared the vision of "Digital Bangladesh", there were very few people who believed it would eventually come true. Turning the dream into reality after one decade, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced another master plan on December 12, 2022 to take Bangladesh towards the next step, which is "**Smart Bangladesh**".

Building on the foundation of the Digital Bangladesh initiative, Smart Bangladesh envisions the development of smart cities, smart agriculture, smart healthcare, smart education, smart energy, smart governance and smart institutions with the ultimate goal of creating a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future for the people of Bangladesh -- another significant stride towards achieving a smarter Bangladesh.

"Smart" refers to the use of advanced technologies, such as the internet of things, artificial intelligence, blockchain, big data, robotics, drone technology, 3D printing and other cutting-edge technologies to improve various aspects of society.

The "Smart Bangladesh" ecosystem will stand on four key pillars –

1. "Smart Citizen"
2. "Smart Government"
3. "Smart Society" and
4. "Smart Economy"

Smart People/Citizens:

Smart citizens/people are who use technology to interact with a Smart City environment, solve local problems and participate in decision-making. On the other hand, Smart Citizenship gives people the knowledge and resources they need to encourage citizen participation in data collection, analysis, and action. Citizens utilizing all the services that have been enhanced by technological, social, and cultural factors is what it means to be a smart citizen (Bayar, 2017). Thus, Lim et al. (2018) has selected five possible characters or behaviors and eight roles or job titles of smart citizens „active“, „independent“, „aware“, „creating public values“, and „educated“, and for the roles, the citizen could become leaders, champions, co-producers, entrepreneurs, proposers, human sensors, volunteers, and experts. Besides, educational level, skills, ability to network social interaction, citizens“ participation in the building of the smart city, trust, and relationships are essential for being smart people.

Smart Government:

The term "Smart Government" refers to a form of government that uses information and communication technologies to improve planning and decision-making and focused on performance, data, and citizens . Broadly, smart government is the management of the neighborhood or civil level, the territorial or state level, the national or government level as well as the supranational and worldwide levels of governance and administration with the help of intelligently networked information and communication technologies (ICT) for the efficient and effective performance of public tasks. Smart government incorporates six elements; the use of technology, smart external collaboration and participation, smart internal administration, smart decision-making, smart administration and aspired outcomes. Smart governance is the basic concept of improving governance through the implementation of the use and exploitation of information technology integrated with the Internet. Thus, some elements of smart government; are smart leadership and management, smart interaction, smart environment, smart services, smart technology or smart infrastructure, and smart security and safety. Additionally, e-administration, e-participation, digital citizenship, digital business, online

public services, and transparent government are also important features of smart government.

Smart Economy:

A smart economy is based on technological development, new entrepreneurial initiatives, sustainability and innovation to improve social well-being, resource efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, reducing energy and pollution to improve the quality of life for all citizens. The smart economy includes smart finance and payment systems that increase efficiency, transform the business environment, create viable opportunities for success, improve the inner workings of communities, and pave the way for larger, safer smart cities. The "Smart Economy" concept combines many features of the new economy with an innovative, sustainable and eco-economic approach: productive economy, global economic growth, competition, economic development, economic prosperity, innovation, sustainable employment, and digital economy. Moreover, a smart economy fosters innovation and creativity, combined with scientific research, high-tech, and environmental protection through sustainability concepts that benefit both current and future economies. Some features of a smart economy are an innovation environment, entrepreneurial tendency, economic image and trademarks, productivity, labor market flexibility, international embeddedness, and the ability to transform/change. Besides, improvement of productivity, creation of jobs, sustaining existing businesses, and creation of business and development of knowledgeable and skillful workforces for all economic sectors are elements of this economy. Some elements of smart economy given in the following table below-

Understanding its economic DNA	Strategic investments
Driving by research and innovation	Supports and develops compelling national brand/s
Evaluating creativity and welcoming new ideas	Balanced and sustainable economic development
Enlightening entrepreneurial leadership	Excels in productivity
Offering diverse economic opportunities	The flexibility of the labor market
Economics works at the local level	Human resources that enhance its wealth
Preparing for the challenges and opportunities of economic globalization	Think local, act local, and compete globally
The sharing economy	

Smart Society/Living:

In the case of discussing elements of smart cities or smart countries, most of the scholars enumerated smart living, some were careful about smart society. Objectives of smart society and smart living are all most same. Smart society provides the first extensive sociological investigation of the term smart living. Digital technologies and methods in the Smart Society will use all available data from all industry niches and all players to provide new insights into known and future challenges such as urbanization, transportation, sustainability, resources, and health. Digital methods and technologies in intelligent societies use all available data to create new solutions to known and future challenges related to citizens' lives and work in all parts of the country. A smart society harnesses the power and potential of technology to make people more productive allowing us to focus our resources on important activities and relationships, and ultimately, to improve health, well-being, and quality of life. Smart society strives to move toward a more citizen-centric approach to problem-solving where citizens are becoming the catalyst for a smart solution that leverages artificial intelligence and big data to break down siloes between sectors and provide new value to society, thus improving people's quality of life. An intelligent society is one in which digital technology is used to improve people's well-being, economic strength and institutional effectiveness. On the other hand, a smart society represents five traits; strong governmental institutions, innovation in public services, public well-being, personalized level of public services, and globally connected economies. There are some features of smart society as- automated society accounting, digitalized payment gateway, digitalized gatekeeper management, easier communication, social facilities, and online economic activities. In the Table 2, some bases of smart society integrating people, economy and institutions.

Benchmark of Smart Society:

People	Economy	Institutions
-Inclusivity	-Global connectedness	-Freedoms offline and online
-Environment and quality of life	-Economic robustness	-Trust
-State of talent and the human condition	-Entrepreneurial ecosystem	- Security and safety
-Talent development	-Innovation capacity	-Public services

Although the government's goal of creating a "Smart Bangladesh" by 2041 is a bold decision, its implementation will be a major challenge. The government needs to prepare a concrete masterplan through extensive discussions with relevant stakeholders. It will be best if a taskforce can be established whose primary goal will be to coordinate with relevant stakeholders. To support emerging technology, regulatory frameworks must be promptly modified. There should be policies in place to support and protect technology IP valuation.

Bangladesh's digital milestones are laudable, but the evolution to a "smart" nation is a continuum, not a destination. The blueprint of Digital Bangladesh is a seminal starting point, but the odyssey to a digitally integrated nation brings forth nuanced challenges that necessitate visionary solutions.

Transitioning from digital integration to a smart society requires a holistic embrace of cutting-edge technologies across healthcare, transport, energy, and governance. This is not merely about technology adoption, but a profound transformation of systems, ideologies, and processes.



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Stages of Projects



Timeline of Projects

2023 to 2025	2023-2024 to 2031	2023-2024 to 2041
Bangla Digital Skills Development, ICT Policy (Information Privacy and Cyber Security, Trade Facilitation), National Procurement E-Market, Digital Job Platform, Smart Public Service and Paperless Administration, Inclusive Financial Resources, Government Cloud, and Data Center.	Universal Digital ID, Digital Curriculum, Smart Device Access, Digital Collaboration Platform, Smart Bangla Campaign, Smart Healthcare, Smart Tax, Blended Learning, Digital Leadership Academy.	Smart Land Management, Smart Postal Service, Smart Judiciary, Smart Borders, Smart Social Safety Net, Police Modernization, Inclusive Financial Ecosystem, FinTech Accelerator, Center of Excellence (COE) for Emerging Technologies.

Smart Bangladesh 2041

Bangladesh government has taken various initiatives for implementing Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041. There are number of running and planned projects having several stages and timeline given in the following Figure below-

In a nutshell it can be said the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was to have a country free of poverty, characterised by social and economic fairness and by shared wealth. Continuing from Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021, the Bangladesh government has adopted Vision 2041 with the express goal of eradicating extreme poverty and achieving high-income country status by 2041. It's the action and work of today that will decide how soon we will be able to reach the goal. The government and private industry should work hand in hand to materialise the dream of "Smart Bangladesh".

By championing this avant-garde medium, Bangladesh stands poised to navigate the digital epoch, surmounting challenges and steering towards a future of unparalleled connectivity, ingenuity, and affluence. In this technology race,

Bangladesh stands the chance to be more than a pioneer – the global leader in voice – just like the saying our Hon'ble PM -

"Every citizen will be skilled in using technology, economic activities will run through using technology, government will be (technologically) smart. And the whole society will be (technologically) smart," - **Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina**



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