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Circulars/Notifications - Digital Innovation & Settlements Department



DI&SD Circular Letter No. 1 of 2022

March 02, 2022

The Presidents/Chief Executives,
All Banks, Microfinance Banks,
EMIs, PSO/PSPs

Dear Madam/Sir,

Standardization of Quick Response (QR) Codes for Payments in Pakistan

Please refer to PSD Circular No. 2 of 2019 dated 27th September 2019 regarding the captioned subject.

1. It has now been decided to issue a specific Standard for QR Codes (QRs) for Merchant payments as well as Person to Person (P2P) payments in Pakistan with the aim of standardizing the QR Issuance and acceptance practices in the country. The objective of issuing QR Code standard for payments is to provide interoperability by ensuring that all QR code scanning devices, including mobile phones, are able to scan any QR code and seamlessly process payments regardless of the issuer or the scheme.
2. Accordingly, with effect from 1st July 2022, all new QR codes shall be issued as per the new standard. Similarly, all issuers shall develop their QR reading/scanning systems to adopt to the attached standard not later than 30th June 2022. The existing QR codes issued by the acquirers also need to be replaced as per the new standard by 30th June 2022.
3. The standard has the capability to incorporate multiple QR schemes; however it will be mandatory for all acquirers and issuers to be part of the Raast merchant payment scheme by 30th June 2022. Hence from 1st July 2022, all issuers of the QR Codes shall have the capability of reading/scanning any QR code issued in Pakistan and process payments accordingly irrespective of the scheme. The acquirers/issuers may also align themselves with other QR Code schemes as per their own feasibility and choice.
4. For on-us transactions, the FI may route the transaction using its own network rails, without the need for routing it via the scheme or Raast rails.
5. Domestic schemes desirous of offering QR codes as a payment mechanism will need to acquire the scheme ID from SBP. Only authorized PSO/PSPs will be issued the first two digits of the Merchant Account Information (MAI) which are used to recognize the scheme for QR payments.
6. The acquirers shall give awareness to their merchants on associated charges/ Merchant Discount Rates etc on QR payments.
7. In case of multiple payment schemes, customers shall have the option to choose the scheme of his/her choice while making payment through QR code scanning. The acquirers shall also encourage enablement of invoice based payments using QR codes.
8. To facilitate the usage of P2P payments using QR codes, FIs are advised to create awareness through written and digital modes of communication as well as other means including but not limited to:
 - Mobile apps and internet banking portals
 - Printing customer's personalized QR Code on their cheque books, bank statements, welcome letters etc.
 - Issuing especially designed "personalized QR Cards" that would help customer to receive payments conveniently
 - Any other mode deemed fit by FIs
9. The detailed Standard for QR codes for Merchant Payments and P2P Payments is enclosed as Annexure-I.
10. Please acknowledge receipt of this Circular Letter via an email to psdoversight@sbp.org.pk

Enclosed: Standard for Interoperable QR Code – Annex-I

Sincerely,

(Muhammad Imaduddin)
Additional Director

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