

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Youth potential stifled by adults



NAZMUL AHASAN

THE World in 2050, a PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) projection published in February, revealed something promising for Bangladesh. We could enter a three-member club—the three fastest growing economies—by 2050, according to the report. Termed as one of the potential drivers of global growth, Bangladesh will “benefit from [its] youthful and fast-growing working-age populations, boosting domestic demand and output.”

As we departed the stage labelled “pre-dividend” and are currently experiencing the “dividend” era, the PWC projection says, our growth is driven even more by real GDP per capita growth than the growth in our working-age population. In order to realise our potential, therefore, we will have to have capital investment and technological

money.

Creating jobs is mandatory for cashing in on this period, but our current job growth is the slowest in two decades. According to Bangladesh government data, between 2013 and 2015–16, the country created 1.4 million jobs, whereas it added four

that 73 percent of Bangladesh’s young population were satisfied with the current state of our economy, but when it came to the job sector, as many as 82 percent expressed disappointment. Furthermore, 63 percent of the respondents said that they did not know what their future goals were. All these illustrate the uncertainty

this year’s theme being “Youth Building Peace.” As conflicts continue to rage across many parts of the world, this slogan couldn’t be more fitting. For us, it is also a time to reflect on our efforts (or a lack thereof) to engage the youth in combating militancy—a growing threat to peace and stability. It’s crucial to look into whether the uncertainty prevalent among our youngsters has anything to do with the recent rise in militancy, among other things.

It should be pointed out that a growing uncertainty over one’s future does not necessarily render one’s descent into militancy. It is irrational to suggest that those resorting to militancy are doing so simply because they are jobless. And it is not about the “moral decay” of youngsters either. It can indeed be argued that our moral values are degrading, and familial bonds weakening. But it is a combination of factors. All that coupled with persistent uncertainty, intolerance and inequality has eroded social cohesion, leading to catastrophic outcomes such as youngsters taking up the path of terrorism.

Siri Hettige, a Sri Lankan sociology professor, reflects, “It is the responsibility of the adults not just to bring children to this world but contribute to creating a socio-political environment that is conducive for their advancement and wellbeing.” Have our adults been able to create an environment that not only helps the society harness the potential of our youth but also prevents them from being exploited by evil forces? When a significant portion of our youth does not know what their future may look like, it does not bode well for our collective destiny. It’s time for the “adults” to dig deeper and introspect as to how their actions have led to the kind of society we live in today.

Nazmul Ahasan is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.



People of working-age in Bangladesh now outnumber those of non-working age. But are we making the best of this opportunity that may not come ever again?

PHOTO: COURTESY

Creating jobs is mandatory for cashing in on this period, but our current job growth is the slowest in two decades. According to Bangladesh government data, between 2013 and 2015–16, the country created 1.4 million jobs, whereas it added four million jobs during 2010–2013, meaning more young people are now unemployed.

That’s the potential of our youth. Since 2007, reported *The Daily Star*, Bangladesh has had more people of working-age—65 percent, to be precise—than non-working. However, laissez faire estimation shows that this “window of opportunity” will start to close by 2040. This period of time, when people of working-age (15–65) outnumber those of non-working age, is the time for a country to accelerate its economic growth.

Some East and Southeast Asian countries benefitted from investing heavily in human resource sectors such as education and health during this period. While there’s no universal model for a country to develop, experts suggest the strategy taken by those countries may also help Bangladesh reap its demographic dividend.

A World Bank report titled *Harnessing the Demographic Dividend in Bangladesh* also supports the argument, suggesting Bangladesh invest more in health and education to sustain this growth for several decades. The data shows otherwise, with only one to two percent of our GDP spent on education and public health sector.

progress to deliver “real labour productivity enhancing benefits.”

However, it seems that our policymakers have hardly heeded this advice. Their obsession with large-scale, expensive infrastructure projects has little to do with capitalising on the precious demographic dividend and has paved the way for swindling public

million jobs during 2010–2013, meaning more young people are now unemployed. The failure to create an adequate number of jobs for our young population has cast a shadow of uncertainty over their future, which became evident in a series of recent surveys conducted by *Prothom Alo*.

The wide-ranging surveys revealed

that has engulfed our youth. Their responses also reflect the fact that Bangladesh’s high GDP growth—more or less six percent—over the years does not alone assure our collective prosperity.

Today, August 12, is International Youth Day, declared by the United Nations, with

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Making “women's work” count



BHARATI SADASIVAM

OVER the next few months, the 12,000 employees based at Apple’s headquarters in Cupertino, California will complete their move to an extravagant new campus. The “spaceship,” covering 2.8 million square feet,

This situation is slowly beginning to change. Unpaid household and care work is gradually shedding its reputation as “women’s work,” and men today are assuming more household responsibilities than their fathers and grandfathers did. Some countries, particularly in Europe, are revising traditional leave policies so that parents can

work to national economies have produced estimates ranging from 20 percent to 60 percent of GDP.

In 2015, United Nations member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for recognising, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work—a measure long proposed by feminist econo-

Government action is needed to ensure that care services cover all who need them—from preschool children to the sick, the disabled, and the elderly—and that they are universally accessible and affordable.

Beyond services, however, achieving the SDG targets will require policy change. Most importantly, governments must establish

countries like Lithuania, Estonia, and even Hungary, demonstrating that they can be applied anywhere.

At a time when many governments, particularly in the developing world, are faced with severe fiscal constraints, such interventions may seem farfetched. But spending on the care sector should be viewed as an investment, not a cost. A recent study in Turkey showed that one dollar of public money invested in the care sector could create 2.5 times as many jobs as a dollar invested in the construction industry. More than half of those jobs—decent jobs that could raise incomes and living standards, particularly for poor households—would go to women.

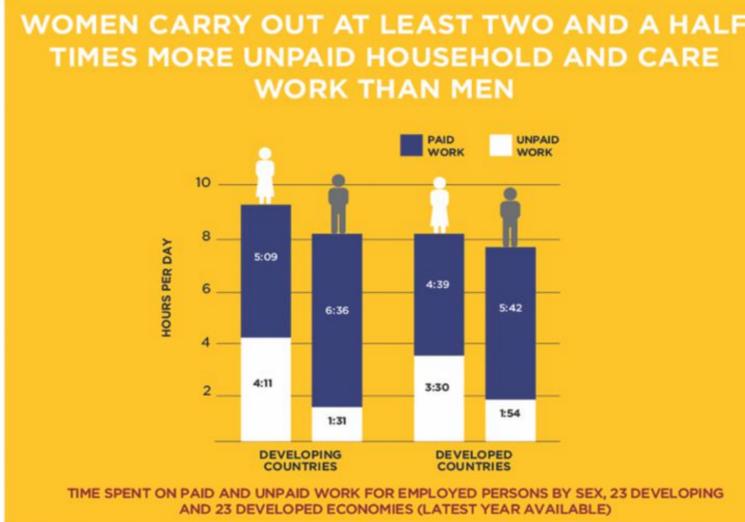
International institutions can play an important role in helping governments to seize the opportunities presented by investment in the care sector. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Nations Development Programme undertook an initiative that helped women who had mostly worked at home their entire lives to find jobs in the care sector, enabling them to make use of their skills, by caring for children and for young adults with disabilities, while earning an income.

As populations grow and age, the care sector will only increase in importance. Adapting to these new circumstances now will give countries a considerable advantage, as it bolsters women’s rights and freedoms, generates jobs, and makes societies more equal. So what are we waiting for?

Bharati Sadasisvam is the United Nations Development Programme’s regional gender adviser for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)



SOURCE: UN WOMEN

Though women around the world actually work more than men in total (including both paid and unpaid work), they earn one quarter less, on average, hold only one quarter of executive positions in the private sector, and occupy less than one quarter of all seats in national parliaments.

choose how to allocate time off after the birth of a child.

More broadly, the value of unpaid household and care work—not just for children and family members, but also for the long-term health of societies and economies—is increasingly being recognised. Efforts to measure the contribution of care

mists and gender-equality advocates. The question now is what can actually be done to meet this objective.

The responsibility will lie, first and foremost, with governments. After all, while businesses or neighbourhood associations may offer childcare options to working parents, costs and quality vary widely.

requirements for parental and family leave programmes. Together with private companies, they can also provide monetary incentives for men and women to share household and care work more equally. Such policies have proved effective not only in Northern Europe—the most commonly cited model—but also in Eastern European

A WORD A DAY



NUMINOUS
adjective

Having a strong religious or spiritual quality

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

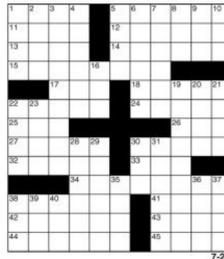
ACROSS

- 1 Corrosive stuff
- 5 Support
- 11 Single
- 12 Rest
- 13 Ludicrous
- 14 Old deliverer
- 15 Dust or pollen
- 17 Perfect serve
- 18 Fence crossing
- 22 Catch-phrase
- 24 Sub system
- 25 Bordeaux buddy
- 26 Fragrant tree
- 27 Like horses
- 30 Desolate areas

- 32 Polygon corner
- 33 H look-alike
- 34 Rosa Parks, for one
- 38 Work over
- 41 Script bit
- 42 State without proof
- 43 Travel stops
- 44 Having a valuable coat
- 45 Gets on

DOWN

- 1 "M*A*S*H" actor
- 2 Fossil fuel
- 3 Puffing up
- 4 Sense
- 5 Prudish one
- 6 School break
- 7 Interested in
- 8 Small dog, for short
- 9 Mex. neighbor
- 10 Stock holder
- 16 Antique auto
- 19 Firing up
- 20 Put down
- 21 Screws up
- 22 Baby's call
- 23 Yemen neighbor
- 28 Thrilled
- 29 Flood
- 30 Attic sight
- 31 Roma's land
- 35 Imitated
- 36 Last Stuart ruler
- 37 Noted loch
- 38 Chips buy
- 39 Yale fan
- 40 The works



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER



BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

