

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A KEY TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

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Jobs and hope for the future



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"Is it a problem of not enough jobs in the national economy, or not enough people with the right skills for them?" This is a question that is often asked, but looking at only one side of the coin provides a partial or even misleading answer. Besides jobs and skills, young people also want to look at the future with hope, confidence and pride in their country.

THE PROMISES OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

One of the 21-point election pledges of the Awami League, the winners in the 2018 national parliamentary election, is about youth. With the motto "Power of Youth: Prosperity of Bangladesh," the party's promise is to transform youth into an organised, disciplined and productive force. Youth is seen as the driving energy for fulfilling the dream of "Shonar Bangla" and building "the digital Bangladesh" (Awami League Manifesto, 2018).

The specific agenda for action emphasises creation of jobs, expansion of education and training, incentives for self-employment, and improving the morale of youth through healthy entertainment and sports.

To create youth employment, the national service programme (offering a public service job to an educated young person from each family) will be extended to all upazillas. It has been promised that 12.8 million jobs for young people would be created in five years. From each upazilla, on an average, one thousand young men and women would be helped to secure jobs

abroad.

Youth training centres will be established in each upazilla. An integrated database of all young people with low, middle and high level of education will be prepared. The scheme of low-interest and no-security loan of two lakh taka will be expanded to encourage

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entrepreneurship and self-employment. A "youth entertainment centre" in each upazilla and a "youth sports complex" in each district will be established (Ibid).

The pre-election promises show the importance given to the role of youth and the need to create the

conditions for them to make their contribution. However, the items listed, each one justifiable in their own right, needs to be part of a holistic approach to strengthening the role and contribution of youth in transforming society and the national economy.

Some salient facts from the Labour Force Survey 2017 need to be noted (BBS, 2018).

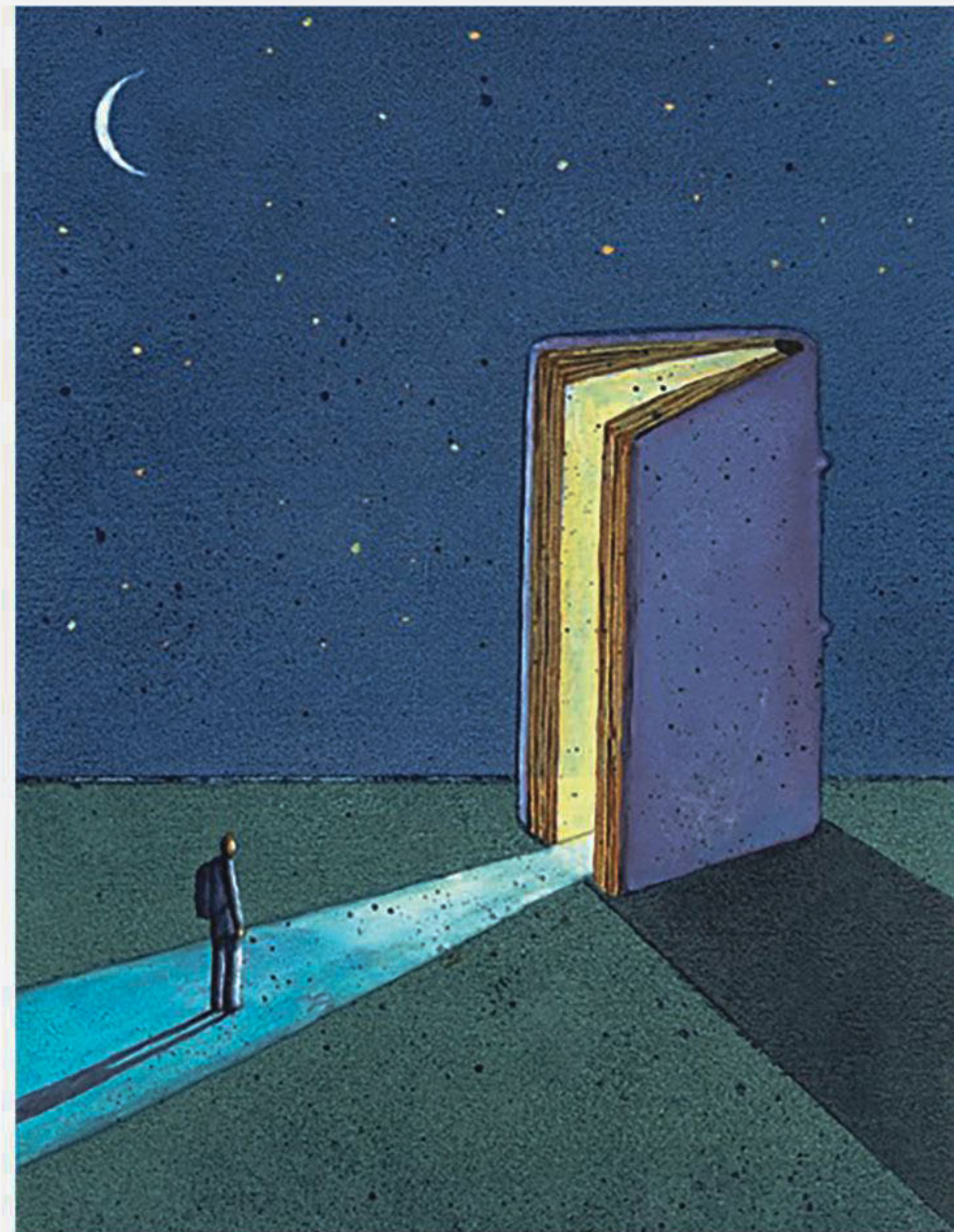
Of the 63.4 million economically active population over 15 years, 47 million or three quarters are categorised as youth.

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Eighty-six percent of the total employed population aged 15 and above was in the informal sector—not under the purview of labour regulations, but it provided livelihood for the vast majority of the population, and kept the economic wheels of the country turning. But it is characterised largely by low skills, low productivity and low earnings of workers.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) also are not specifically geared to the informal economy jobs. TVET is provided by over 13,000 training centres in the public and private sectors. About 1.3 million people received training on 87 trades in the country in 2017.

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