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Lanka allows entry for controversial Chinese ship



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Tips to lose 100 pounds or more



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Ancelotti to retire after Real Madrid spell



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Daunting time for fixed-income people

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND Are we letting it pass us by?

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Bangladesh is wasting its once-in-a-lifetime window of demographic dividend -- the economic growth potential that can result from a peak in working-age people -- due to its inability to create jobs.

Currently, 65.6 percent of the population of 16.51 crore is of working age -- 15 to 64 -- according to the Population and Housing Census 2022.

In theory, when there are growing numbers of people in the workforce relative to the number of dependents, the chances for swift economic growth are higher as more people have the potential to be productive and contribute to the economy.

It is argued that the "economic miracles" seen by Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan between the early 1960s and 1990s and the economic boom witnessed by Ireland in the 1990s were down to demographic dividend.

In Bangladesh, the window opened during the mid-noughties -- thanks to low fertility and mortality rates and the workforce having fewer dependents -- and is expected to slam shut by 2045.

But it appears the country is struggling to tap this favourable demographic profile and grow into an economic powerhouse.

About a third of the youth in Bangladesh are not engaged in employment, education and training, according to Hossain Zillur Rahman, chairman of Brac.

"With two dimensions, we can see how much of the demographic dividends the country is reaping."

The two dimensions are: how many youths are being turned into skilled manpower through quality education and how many skilled youths are being absorbed into remunerative employment.

Zillur, also the executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, said the country's two economic growth drivers, the garment sector and manpower exports, are based on cheap labour.

"Young Bangladeshis are trying [to get employed] on their own but are not getting support from the system," Zillur said, adding that about 87 percent are engaged in informal employment.

The unemployment rate is higher -- 47 percent -- among the educated, according to the 2016 Labour Force Survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Unemployment among university graduates is about 10 percent.

At least 66 percent of graduates from colleges affiliated with the National University are not getting jobs, according to a 2021 survey by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

Every year, 20 lakh people are added to the labour force but jobs are not created in that proportion, resulting in a large portion remaining unemployed, BBS said.

For at least the next 20 years, there will be huge manpower, said Aminul Haque, professor at Dhaka University's Department of Population Sciences.

"But will they be engaged in employment and contribute to the GDP? If not, it will be a burden for the state," he said, while calling for investment in vocational and technical education, and expanding the service sectors.

To get the maximum and quality benefits from the window of demographic dividend, substantial investment in the health and education sector is needed, said Selim Raihan, professor of economics at the University of Dhaka.

"But our investment is very insignificant and it is not

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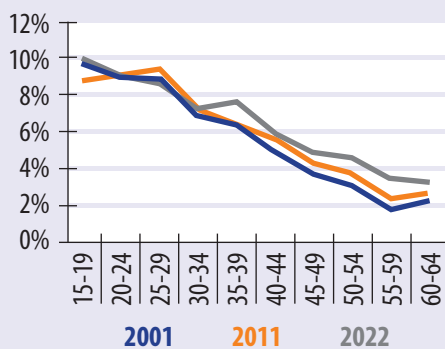
THE GREAT UNTAPPED RESOURCE

We have the chance to reap the benefits of demographic dividends until 2045 but so far we are doing nothing.

Ubaidur Rob, country director of Population Council

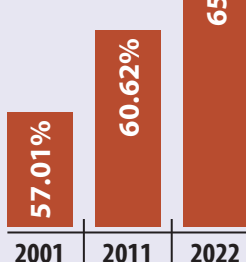
PEAK PERIOD TO REAP DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

BREAKDOWN OF WORKING AGE POPULATION OVER THE YEARS (IN %)

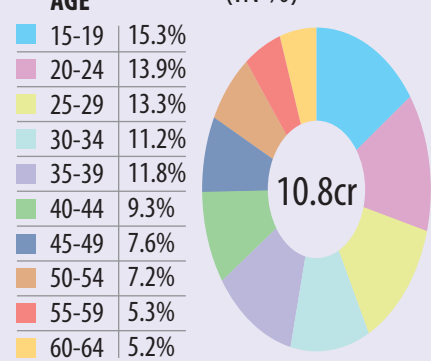


WORKING AGE POPULATION AS % OF TOTAL POPULATION

SOURCE: POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2022



CURRENT WORKING AGE POPULATION BREAKDOWN (IN %)



CYBERCRIMES

73pc victims stay mum: study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 73 percent victims of cybercrime do not seek legal assistance, and those who do, more than half of them found the support inadequate, said Cyber Crime Awareness Foundation.

Only 7 percent of the victims were provided with the support they hoped to get, it said in a report released yesterday.

The data is based on statements of 199 individuals who contacted the foundation after facing online harassment between February 15, 2021, and March 2, 2022, Kazi Mustafiz, president of the foundation, told a press conference at Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh in the capital.

According to the report, more than 80 percent of the respondents were aged between 18 and 30, 13.57 percent aged below 18, 5.03 percent aged 31-45, and less than one percent was over 45.

The participants said they were bullied, had received pornographic content, defamation threats, and

CYBERCRIME VICTIMS

21pc wanted to keep matters secret

17pc didn't file complaint to protect their image

17pc feared complaint may bring harassment

17pc thought filing complaint was futile

intimidating messages via social media and the phone.

Monira Nazmi Jahan, research coordinator at the foundation, said incidents of hacking of social media and other online accounts were becoming common.

She added that about 15 percent

of the individuals taking part in the study said they were defrauded while shopping online, and 23.79 percent said their online accounts were hacked.

The study further found that the number of female victims is comparatively smaller than that of male victims. Among women victims, only 11.06 percent approached law enforcement agencies, while 45.73 percent were reluctant to take any legal action.

Over 43.22 percent of the respondents were women and the rest were men.

Over 9 percent said they were harassed with personal photos or videos. The percentage was 7.69 in the report on the previous year. Harassment with photoshopped images was 6.93 percent, up from 5.85 percent.

Sultana Ishrat Jahan, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, urged people to contact the police if they felt that they were victims of cybercrime.

Other speakers said creating awareness about cybercrime was key to fight the crime.

BIMAN HANGAR ACCIDENTS

Stern actions will prevent repeat Aviation experts say

RASHIDUL HASAN

Two similar accidents in front of the hangar of Biman Bangladesh Airlines at the Dhaka airport have raised questions about the national flag carrier's efficiency and the sincerity of its staff in carrying out their roles.

The two bizarre accidents, which left Biman with four damaged aircraft, happened while towing the planes to the airline's 1.5 lakh square feet hangar at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from the boarding bridge using a tow truck.

"Taking the aircraft to the hangar from the boarding bridge is not the work of rocket science -- it's pretty simple," said ATM Nazrul Islam, an aviation expert who worked with a host of private airlines.

The rules or protocols regarding moving the aircraft to the hangar are not properly followed by the people in charge of the ground handling service.

"They lack sincerity in doing their jobs," he added.

According to airport officials, one of the accidents happened because a ground support staff of Biman asked a cleaner to give instructions to the tow truck driver.

Due to lack of know-how, the cleaner, who was among the six to seven others involved in the incident, gave wrong instructions, the officials said on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly on the matter.

In another incident, a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft on June 16, collided with the boarding bridge at HSIA. On June 4, a trolley dolly of a private airline hit a Boeing 737 aircraft of Biman at the Dhaka airport.

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AL's polls pledges in many cases unrealistic

Finds CPD study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many of the pledges made in the ruling Awami League's 2018 election manifesto are unrealistic, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said yesterday.

The think-tank came up with the observation in a study that analysed AL's electoral pledges on education, decent employment, and gender equality.

Findings of the study were discussed in the inaugural session of a daylong dialogue titled "Nagorik Shonglap" at a city hotel.

The ruling party's 2018 election manifesto styled "Bangladesh on March towards Prosperity" focused on 33 sectors.

The CPD said AL manifesto had made 46 pledges on decent employment. However, only 24 of those commitments are specific and target-oriented.

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Tea estate workers demonstrating in Chowhatta area of Sylhet demanding a daily wage of Tk 300 from the current Tk 120, which they say is not enough to buy a half-decent meal as food prices keep rising. As per an agreement between the associations of the workers and owners, the wage was due to be revised in January 2021.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

TEA WORKERS' DEMO FOR RAISE

'No one cares about our pain'

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Demanding a pay hike, tea garden workers across the country yesterday went on an indefinite work abstention. They are demanding a daily wage of Tk 300, while they are currently paid Tk 120.

Workers of 166 tea estates across the country, including those in Chattogram and Sylhet, enforced the programme following Bangladesh Tea Workers Union's call on Friday.

As part of the programme, workers of different tea gardens formed human chains, staged demonstrations and blocked roads.

In Moulvibazar, workers blockaded roads in at least four points, including Brahmanbazar, Luhauni and Shamsnagar, for two hours from 10:00am causing around 2km tailbacks on the Moulvibazar-Borolekha regional highway.

Sabita Gorait, a demonstrator in Luhauni, said, "No one understands our pain. We work so hard, but aren't paid fairly. There are expenses for treatment and our children's education. While prices of daily essentials are increasing every day, our wages are not."

Lakshmani Singh, another demonstrating worker, said, "I have to stand all the daylong in the scorching heat while working. Sometimes, I get drenched in rain. Sometimes, insects bite me. I work despite all these difficulties. Tk 120 is not a fair wage considering the present situation."

Normally, tea workers' wages are fixed under a contract or agreement between the Bangladeshi Tea Sangsad, an association of tea estate owners, and Bangladesh Tea Workers' Union, said Nipen Paul, acting general secretary of the union.

As per a contract signed in October 2020, the wages are supposed to be revised every two years. That year the workers got a raise with retrospective effect from January 2019.

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