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BANGLADESH ON THE WORLD STAGE

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Challenges on the road to becoming the 28th largest economy

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So, often, we hear complaints from the business community about their inability to find skilled workers, leading them to hire foreign professionals due to a lack of efficient local human resources. This not only hampers the country's job market but also increases the strain on Bangladesh's depleting foreign-currency reserves.

Regrettably, our education budget doesn't reflect the urgency of developing human resources. The country spends around two percent of its GDP on education, which is the lowest among South Asian countries. It is high time for Bangladesh to focus on enhancing its education system, ensuring that the workforce is equipped with the skills necessary for the evolving job market. A well-educated and skilled population is not only vital for fostering innovation but also for attracting high-value industries and investments.

It's unfortunate that, even after 52 years of independence, the country's healthcare sector is in shambles. It is shameful that a nation on the path to becoming the 28th largest economy in the world still witnesses a substantial number of its citizens, including politicians, businessmen, and ordinary people, seeking medical treatment abroad each year. This trend reflects a lack of confidence in our own healthcare system. While individuals choosing overseas medical care may argue that they owe no public explanation, the scenario takes a more alarming turn when Bangladeshi leaders and politicians follow suit. Their decision to seek medical treatment abroad is not just a personal matter but a cause for concern, as they bear the responsibility for the development of a robust healthcare system for their fellow citizens.

This prevailing culture



A vendor sells fish at a market in Dhaka.

PHOTO: REUTERS



VISUAL: STAR

needs to be transformed urgently, given its detrimental impact on our hard-earned foreign currency reserves and the nation's image. The government should prioritise and guarantee equitable access to high-quality health services for all citizens. Failing to improve our health sector not only jeopardises the well-being of our population but also threatens to erode the significant economic gains Bangladesh has achieved over the years. Therefore, concerted efforts are imperative to instigate a paradigm shift and ensure that the healthcare system becomes a source of pride and reliability for every citizen, discouraging the need for seeking medical treatment abroad.

Corruption is a global

problem, and Bangladesh is no exception to this pervasive issue. While the country holds the 147th position out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2022, according to Transparency International, it is important to recognise that this ranking does not implicate every citizen in the web of corruption. I firmly believe that the majority of Bangladeshis are honest and possess integrity. Nevertheless, the harsh reality persists that a handful of people within key sectors such as government offices, businesses, healthcare, education, and political institutions are involved in corrupt practices such as bribery, embezzlement of public funds, bank loan scams, money laundering, under/over

invoicing, adulteration of food and drugs, and various forms of cheating.

It is unfortunate that despite governmental claims of zero tolerance for corruption, there is a disconcerting trend where powerful individuals often escape accountability. It should be noted that instances of overlooking or condoning corrupt practices among associates, friends, and political supporters erode public trust, perpetuating a culture where dishonesty might be perceived as justifiable. The need to break free from this complacency is urgent. Holding wrongdoers accountable and instituting stringent measures against corruption are imperative. Currently, the absence of severe consequences for influential figures engaged

in corrupt activities not only perpetuates a cycle of impunity but also undermines public confidence in the democratic process. It is time to revisit and reinforce our commitment to eradicating corruption.

Effective law enforcement is a critical pillar in ensuring that the corrupt face justice and that the culture of impunity is dismantled. However, punitive measures alone are insufficient, a comprehensive approach that includes legal reforms, institutional strengthening, and increased societal awareness is indispensable to combatting corruption. These measures are not only vital for sustained economic growth but are also fundamental for elevating Bangladesh's standing on the international stage.

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