



DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 13, 2024, JAISHTHA 30, 1431 BS

A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

CAMPUS

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS CAMPUS ONLINE



Breaking down the **FY2024-25** EDUCATION BUDGET

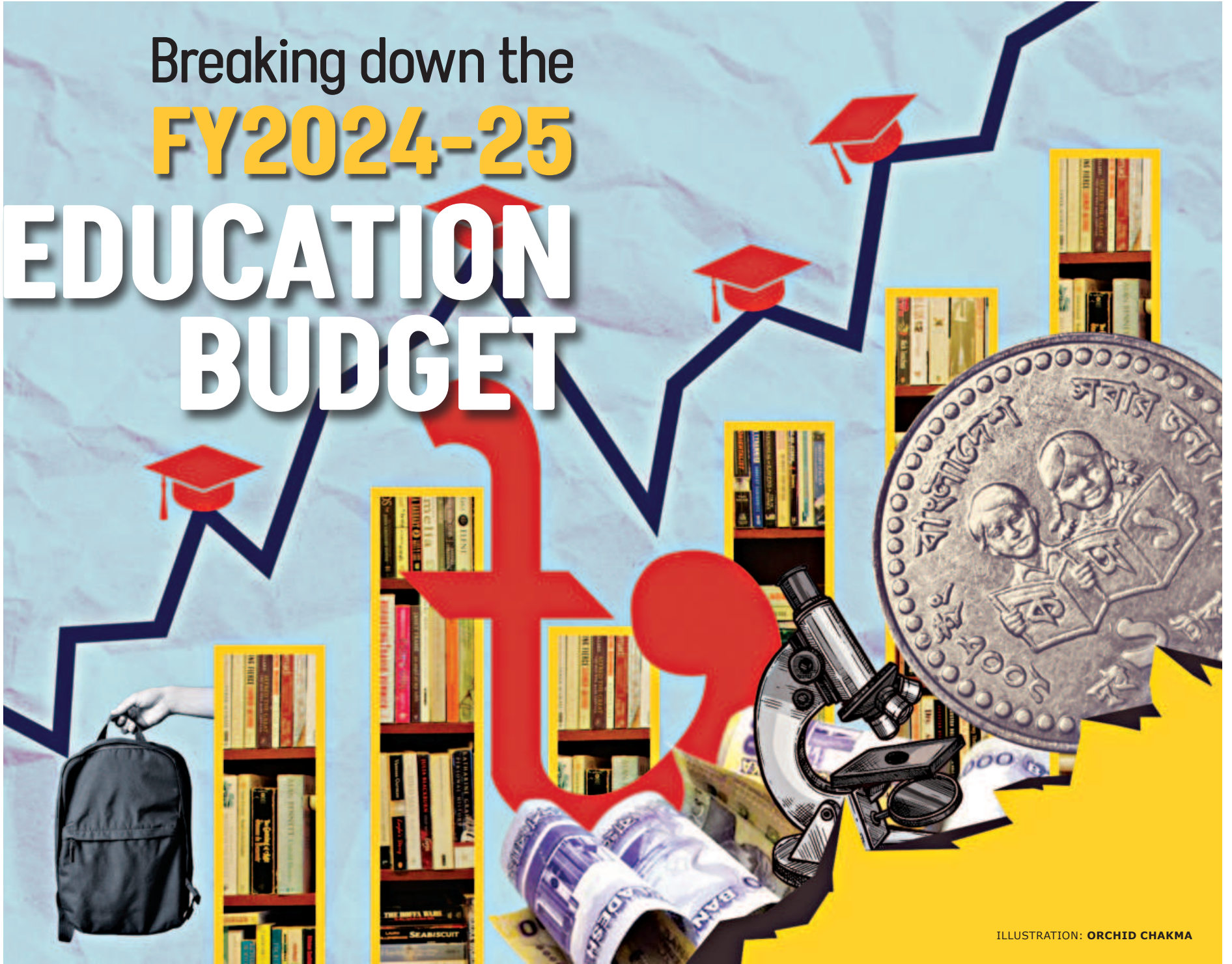


ILLUSTRATION: ORCHID CHAKMA



WALTON

Smart Fridge

Walton Single Door Refrigerator

Spacious Inside, Compact Outside
A Perfect Balance for Your Daily Needs

Available Size: 93L, 193L & 225L



08000018267 (Toll Free)

waltonbd.com

MUSIC

ATARASHII GAKKO!

A rebellious quartet redefining J-pop

KOUSHIN UNBER

As someone who's never cared for J-pop much, I wasn't expecting to be impressed. But by the time the electrifying bridge to "Tokyo Calling" came around, I was already fascinated by the girl group Atarashii Gakko!

It's hard to define this Japanese quartet's style of music. Some of their numbers are electrifying pop, some are jazz, and some are rambunctious hip-hop. The genre-defying girl group prides itself on feeding everything and anything into their music and simply going with what best matches their individual styles.

Originally founded in 2015, Atarashii Gakko! only made the world stage in 2021 under the record label 88rising, the "Disney of Asian hip hop". Since then, the group has played in festivals in New York and Los Angeles, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, and Coachella 2024.

Military helmets, deadpan expressions, hard-driving *taiko* drums, full-length Japanese school uniforms, and recreations of Tokyoites in dead-end careers are only some of the characteristics of the "Tokyo Calling" music video. The choreography is quirky, unconventional, and free from various industry-enforced elements – a fresh new style that sets them apart from other



PHOTO: COLLECTED

J-pop groups.

In an overly saturated music industry of bright aesthetics, high production value, and large group sizes, Atarashii Gakko! creates its own style of song and dance that's hard to not find catchy. The rebellious energy of this song reflects the part of Tokyo's youth who wants to break free from the oppressive work-life imbalance of the city.

Atarashii Gakko! want to be the right type of role model for the new generation, one that focuses on expressing individuality and freedom while also following societal (or

school) rules. Onstage and off, the members radiate chaotic energy, bouncing off of each other in an immature yet charismatic way. Their songs "Otonablue" is 70s-inspired, "Toryanse" is children's folk, and "FRDP" is modern and funky. Atarashii Gakko!'s range in musical diversity is impressive, and even if you don't like J-pop, rest assured that there is a song by them that will certainly suit your music taste.

Koushin Unber is an incoming freshman at the University of Florida.



OPPORTUNITIES SAMSUNG

Samsung R&D Institute – Intern (Software Testing)

ELIGIBILITY

Bachelor of Science (BSc) in CSE, IT, or EEE

Minimum CGPA 3.00

Good knowledge on software engineering and testing

Good knowledge in one programming language (Python/C/C++)

Requires knowledge between SDLC vs STLC

Visit research.samsung.com/srbd to learn more

DEADLINE: JUNE 19, 2024



BRAC – Officer (Quality Assurance, Aarong Dairy)

ELIGIBILITY

Knowledge on food safety management system, lab analysis, qualitative data analysis

Must have BSc in Bio-chemistry, Food Technology, or Dairy Science

Visit careers.brac.net to learn more

DEADLINE: JUNE 22, 2024



10 Minute School – Intern (Sales)

ELIGIBILITY

Currently a final-year undergraduate (with only internship pending) or graduate student interested in pursuing a career in sales

Excellent communication skills.

Strong problem-solving abilities.

Visit linkedin.com/company/10ms to learn

DEADLINE: NOT MENTIONED

Editor & Publisher
Mahfuz Anam

Features Editor and
Head of Content
Marketing
Ehsanur Raza Ronny

Campus Team
Faisal Bin Iqbal
Syeda Afrin Tarannum
Fatima Jahan Ena
Abir Hossain
Amrin Tasnim Rafa

Photographer
Orchid Chakma

Graphics & Layout
TDS Creative Graphics

Production
Shamim Chowdhury

Send your articles,
feedback, and
opinion to campus@thedailystar.net
Find our content online
at thedailystar.net/campus

Opening up a world of opportunities

The dream of overseas education made easier

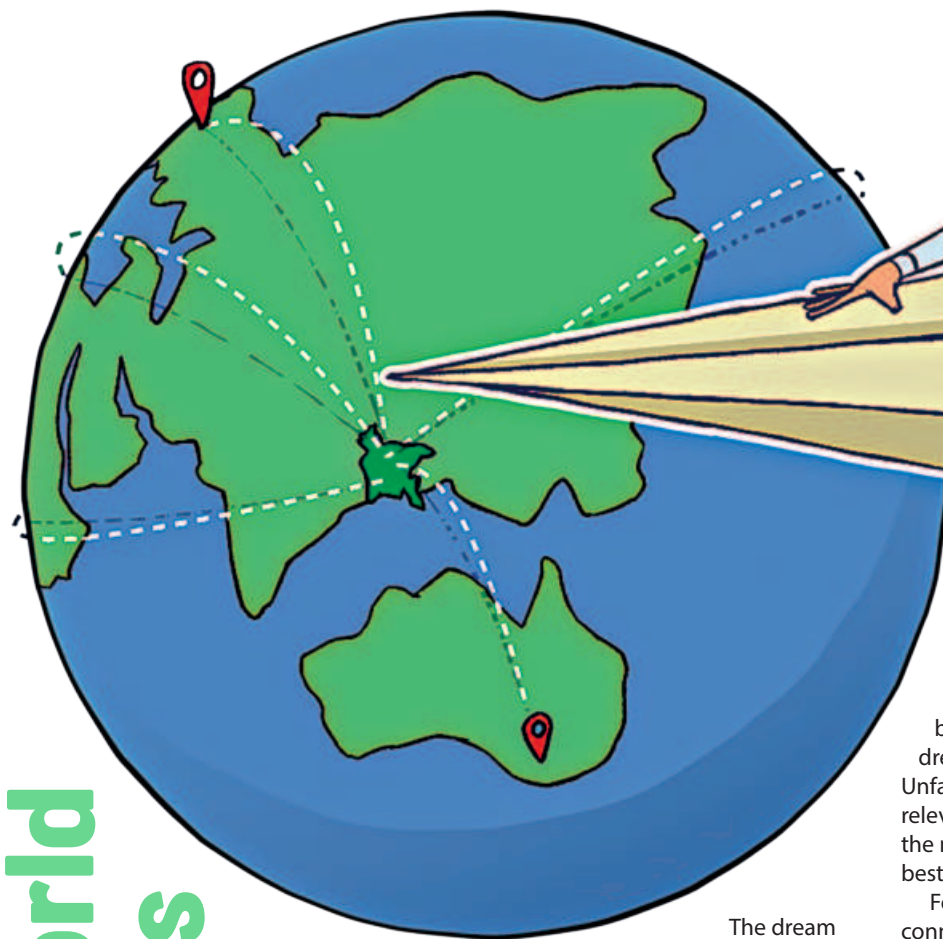


ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

The dream of pursuing higher studies abroad is very common for most students. Translating the dream into reality, however, takes hefty effort which students and their guardians realise only once they get started with the process of applying and going abroad.

The success stories we hear of students setting off to their academic adventures abroad require a significant amount of planning and work behind the scenes – from choosing a destination country, selecting the educational institution, securing an offer letter, and passing through visa processes to navigating a myriad of other hurdles. As the departure date draws nearer, it's those meticulously packed suitcases that stand as silent witnesses to the whirlwind of worries that had to be overcome.

Amidst all these, one thing that students often anticipate a bit late is how to make smooth payments for their tuition fees and living expenses. Typically, the search for the right financial institution starts quite late in this journey. The inability to ensure timely financial arrangements, however, can act as a major obstacle in the entire process of pursuing higher studies abroad.

Navigating the complex world of payments and financial transactions

across borders can be challenging for parents and students. Without a reliable financial partnership or proper guidance at each step, it becomes arduous to translate the dream of studying abroad into reality. Unfamiliarity with foreign exchange and relevant knowledge can further complicate the matter, leaving them unsure of how to best manage their finances.

For this conundrum, HSBC's international connectivity can be a boon for students studying abroad, offering a seamless financial experience across borders.

With its global presence and network across more than 62 countries and territories, HSBC's account facilitates easy access to funds while giving students a sense of connectivity even when they are living far away from home. With HSBC, students can be better prepared and get a head start by opening accounts in countries including the UK, Australia, and other destinations even before their departure. With HSBC's extensive ATM network, personalised support from local branches, online banking services, and expertise in international money transfers, the students can navigate the foreign land with ease. This global reach ensures that students can focus on their studies, knowing their banking needs are comprehensively covered.

Making future leaders realise that dreams do not have to be confined to geographical borders – that is what HSBC aspires to.

If you are someone who is navigating the journey of pursuing higher studies abroad and want to explore how HSBC's International Education Services can support you in this journey, please feel free to reach out to shuvodhani.paul@hsbc.com.bd.

How to plan your finances as a college student abroad

Make a monthly budget

Making a monthly budget helps you to track your finances on a monthly basis. It aids you in having a clearer grasp of your spending habits and identifying areas where you can cut back. A monthly budget is a must-have tool for anyone wishing to take control of their finances and lay a solid financial foundation.

Keep track of your receipts

Receipts may seem small and insignificant, but they are critical when it comes to tracking personal expenses. They assist you in monitoring your spending, and staying on budget. Keeping track of receipts has become convenient than ever before, thanks to a variety of apps available. The key to success, however, is to develop and stick to a routine.



WITH BSRM FASTBUILD
YOUR HOME WILL BE BUILT ON TIME
WITH THE BEST QUALITY RODS



■ EDUCATION ■

Breaking down the FY2024-25 EDUCATION BUDGET

Time and again, it has been emphasised that smart citizens are an integral part of building a “prosperous and smart Bangladesh”. Thus, 11.88 percent of the total budget has been dedicated to education alone. When broken down, BDT 38,819 crore has been proposed for primary and mass education – a jump from BDT 34,722 crore in the outgoing fiscal year.

ABIR HOSSAIN

The budget for the FY 2024-25 was unveiled last Thursday, June 6. With it, the state’s policy and plans for spending on education were also revealed. The government has proposed to allocate BDT 94,710 crore which is a 7.42 percent increase from the outgoing fiscal year.

Time and again, it has been emphasised that smart citizens are an integral part of building a “prosperous and smart Bangladesh”. Thus, 11.88 percent of the total budget has been dedicated to education alone. When broken down, BDT 38,819 crore has been proposed for primary and mass education – a jump from BDT 34,722 crore in the outgoing fiscal year.

As for secondary and higher education, BDT 44,108 crore has been proposed which was BDT 42,839 crore for FY 2023-24. Aside from Primary and Mass education, and Secondary and Higher education, BDT 11,783 crore has been proposed for the Technical and Madrasa Education Division which was BDT 10,602 crore in the last fiscal year.

The budget has increased across all levels of education. On the surface, the numbers appear to align with the government’s claims about education being one of the most important sectors to invest in. While there has been an increase in the amount proposed, it simply falls short of global standards.

Such a pattern has also, unfortunately, been evident in the last couple of years with spending as a percentage of GDP

either going up in small incremental amounts or falling completely. Spending on education has been less than two percent as a percentage of GDP over the last 15 years and it is one of the lowest amongst the least developed countries.

Mohammad Mojibur Rahman, Professor, Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University shares his concerns about these trends, “UNESCO recommends investing six percent of the total GDP on education. Even if we aren’t investing as much, we could at least be getting closer to that number. Instead, we appear to be focusing elsewhere.”

He adds, “The main reason for that is the state administrators. If they have the mind-set that investing in areas other than education is going to yield greater benefits for them, such as prolonging their time in office, then they will proceed to do just that, and the symptoms are evident. It’s because of such an outlook by the administrators that has caused the nation to suffer from a lack of interest in investing in education.”

crore that was allocated for Secondary and Higher Education Vision, only BDT 5,502 crore was spent.

“While the overall spending has increased, what must be assured is qualitative spending. There could be overspending as well. The overall expenditure can go up due to inefficiencies in the system or even corruption. So, the spending amount must be justified,” said Tanvir Sobhan, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Economics and Social Science at BRAC University.

“A lot of the projects that are undertaken are quite unnecessary. They are pursued despite the existence of more pressing issues. If the necessary projects are really taken up, adequate funds would be invested,” asserted Rahman.

“With the aim of building a Smart Bangladesh, a science-based, up to date, and pragmatic new education curriculum has been introduced from the academic year of 2023,” said Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad in her full budget speech.

She also expanded upon the government’s training programmes, especially in the 2022-23 academic year, where 2,98,246 class teachers, 29,564 headmasters, and 597 education-related officials were trained. Science equipment has also been distributed to 20,000

educational institutions with other educational materials also being supplied to 30,000 educational institutions.

While a lot has been said about the new curriculum, how it bodes will boil down to the quality of the teachers and whether or not they can face the challenges that a new curriculum poses. To ensure that of course, will require investment in training human resources. Without the right teachers, the new curriculum will be difficult to execute.

Such a prospect risks stifling the population in more ways than one. After all, education is a means for people to enhance mobilisation, expand their skillset, and strive for a better quality of life. Therefore, these investments must be well accounted for in all aspects because education is perhaps the most important factor in shaping the future of any country.

Abir Hossain is a sub-editor at Campus, Rising Stars, and Star Youth.



“With investment in education decreasing, we will come up short on multiple fronts,” he reiterated.

Despite such troubling developments, the state could make the argument that if the proposed budget is spent diligently in the right places and to its full extent, education in Bangladesh could improve drastically. The sectoral allocations for the Annual Development Programme are BDT 16,136 crore and BDT 11,388 crore for the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Secondary and Higher Education respectively.

However, a glance at the outgoing fiscal year’s numbers reveals that the funds were underinvested. Out of the BDT 14,086

■ EDUCATION ■

BUDGET FOR EDUCATION

What's the real impact on students?

Every year the government announces how they plan to allocate funds and which areas to focus their expenditure. Education is among the top priorities. This year (Fiscal year 2024-25) the proposed allocation for the education sector is BDT 94,710 crore, an increase from last year's revised budget of BDT 88,162 crore.

NOYOLEE MUNIM

So has the budget for education really increased? In nominal terms, yes, but when we look at the allocation in percentage of GDP we find that it has decreased from 1.76 last year to 1.69 this year. Not only is this the lowest allocation in the last 16 years, but it is even more concerning as it falls way below UNESCO's recommended 4 to 6 percent allocation of GDP for this sector.

In regards to this, Professor Sayema Haque Bidisha of the Department of Economics, Dhaka University, says, "Compared to the South Asian and LMIC average, we invest much less in our education sector. Most of our efforts are centred on infrastructural development such as more classrooms, computer labs, and textbooks. There is hardly any emphasis on increasing the quality of education by, say, better remuneration for primary school teachers. If we cannot incentivise good students to become teachers in primary schools, then the foundation will remain weak."

The lack of well-educated primary school teachers, especially in rural areas, hinders the ability of students to learn and achieve higher levels of qualification. While bigger classrooms and better facilities are useful, teachers are the biggest driving force.

Professor Sharmin Neelormi of the Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University, echoed similar concerns about the lack of emphasis on quality development and also talked about the gender gap in education.

"If we look at the Gender Budget Index 2023, we can see that Bangladesh is number 1 in the world for primary school education enrollment but for secondary school enrollment the rank drops to 116. There are many reasons for this, child marriage and lack of proper sanitary system being a few.

Despite this

gender gap, there is no suggestion for improvement regarding this in the gender budget," says Professor Neelormi.

The negligence of quality education is reflected in the growing youth unemployment rates. The Labor Force Survey Report 2022 shows that tertiary education graduates have the highest unemployment rates among all levels of education, 12 percent to be exact. However, according to data reported by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), from the total number of unemployed graduates, female graduates make up around 19 percent. The survey further revealed that the rate of joblessness increased with the level of higher education.

"There is a skill mismatch between what is being taught in academia and what industry demands," says Professor Bidisha. "We need to equip our students in the way the job market requires, be it through specialised diplomas or rigorous training. Most importantly, we need to invest in our education system now more than ever because implementation is slower in this sector and results will only come about in the long run".

When asked about recommendations to increase the youth unemployment rate, especially among women, Professor Neelormi responded. "We see that urban female labour force participation is trailing far behind rural females. This means we have many educated but unemployed females which is not good for the development of our country. The

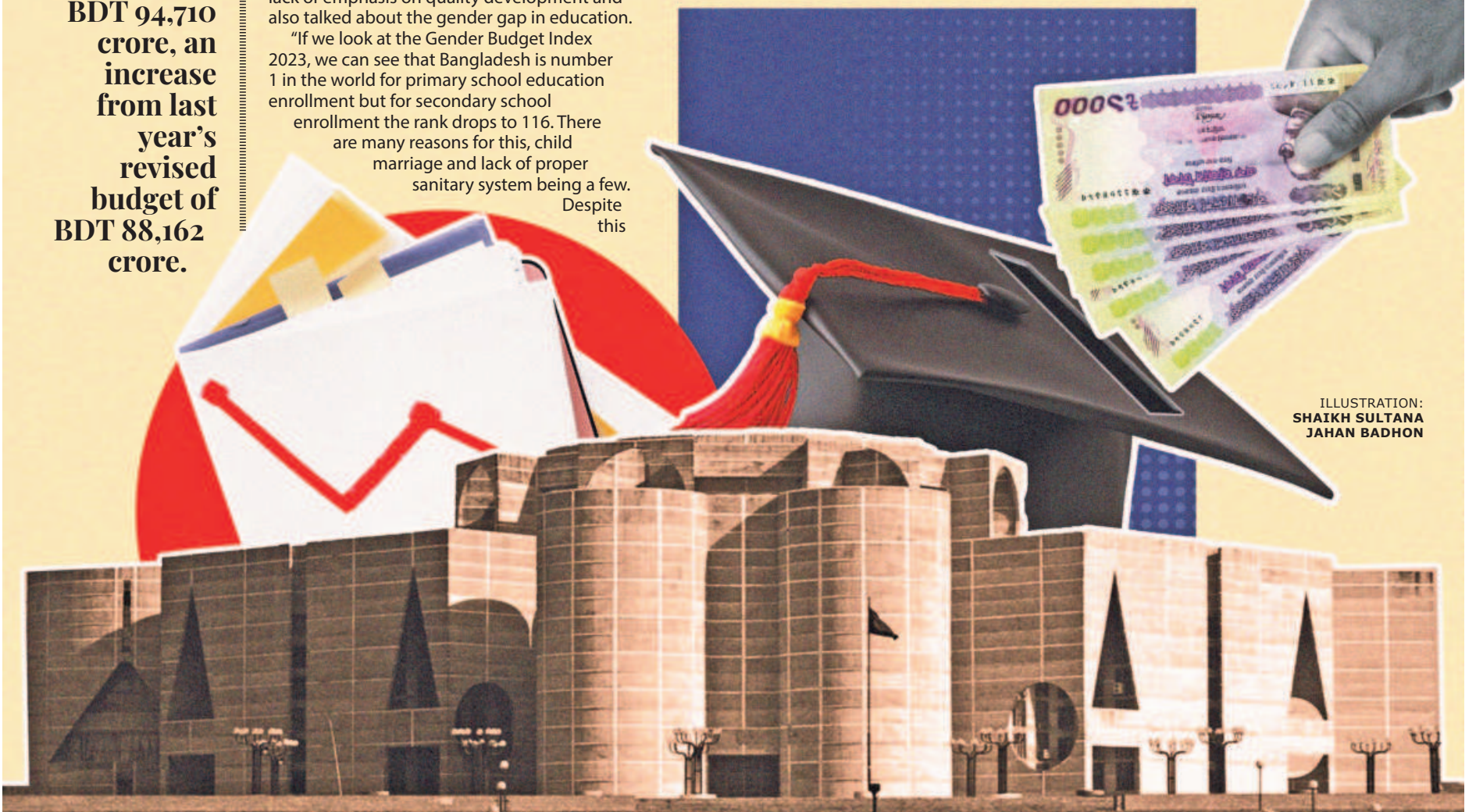
budget should include ways to help them find jobs, such as through job creation, vocational training, and quotas. It's hard for rural women to avail startup capital as banks prefer to give out larger loans and the lengthy paperwork often becomes a big barrier for them" she explained.

While it's a good sign that rural female labour force participation (FLFP) is increasing, it means that more women are working in the agricultural sector where there is low pay and requires low skill levels. To uplift women from low to high-skill jobs, there must be an emphasis on primary education and job creation.

Overall, the budget for education has not increased in real terms. There are many areas which need further attention. The budget needs to prioritise the quality of education over infrastructural developments in schools and colleges. The gender gap should also be kept in mind when making policies. Vocational training, job creation and specialised diplomas were a few suggestions to help decrease the vast number of educated graduates in the country. Most importantly, the budget for education needs to be on par with the global standard. We can only reap the benefits of education in the long run so we must invest today.

Noyolee Munim is 4th year student of the Department of Economics, Dhaka University.

ILLUSTRATION:
SHAikh SULTANA
JAHAN BADHON



BRAC UNIVERSITY hosts two-day career fair



A two-day career fair was launched at BRAC University on June 5, organised by BRAC University's Office of Career Services and Alumni Relations. More than 80 organisations participated in this career fair. The two-day fair had on-spot interviews and career seminars.

Through this career fair, students and alumni of BRAC University learned about various job opportunities and employers in various sectors. As a result, their understanding of the job market was made much clearer. The career fair had special sessions on career topics with the participation of industry leaders and experts. These sessions helped the students develop themselves as skilled human resources alongside continuing their academic studies.

Professor Mohammad Mahboob Rahman, Treasurer of BRAC University, gave the welcome speech at the opening ceremony of the career fair at the multipurpose hall of the university. BRAC Bank Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Selim RF Hussain and Therap BD Limited's Asia, Middle East and North Africa and Africa Region Business Development Director Prattay Iqbal spoke as special guests on the occasion. BRAC University Registrar David Dowland gave the closing speech.

RF Hossain said, "We consider investing in the youth as investing in the future. Through this we want to make our future generation innovative."

Professor Rahman said, "The career fair is very important for students. It shows the job context for the students in the country and abroad and through the career fair students get a platform to prepare themselves according to that demand."



SUB celebrates World Environment Day 2024

The Department of Environmental Science at State University of Bangladesh (SUB) organised an event to celebrate World Environment Day (WED) on June 7. Held at the university's permanent campus, the event featured a seminar and a tree plantation session, drawing the active participation of students, faculty members, and guests.

The seminar was highlighted by a keynote address from Muhammad Selim Hossain, a research fellow at Devpro Partners (Global Environmental Strategy) and advisor to the Department of Environmental Science. Hossain's insightful discussion emphasised the critical need for immediate action in land restoration, desertification, and drought resilience, aligning with this year's WED theme "Our Land, Our Future". His address inspired attendees to recognise their shared responsibility in protecting and restoring ecosystems.

Heads of departments, faculty members, and students engaged in productive discussions, exchanging ideas and strategies to combat

environmental challenges. The seminar underscored the university's commitment to environmental sustainability and the pivotal role that education and research play in fostering a greener future.

Following the seminar, participants took part in a tree plantation session, symbolising their dedication to ecological preservation and land restoration.

Along with June 7 celebrations, SUB Pharma Environmental and Social Work Club, and SUB Environmental Club celebrated World Environment Day separately on June 5 at the SUB Permanent Campus with a rally and a tree plantation programme.

"We are proud to celebrate World Environment Day with such enthusiasm and dedication," said Prof. Dr Mofizur Rahman, Vice Chancellor, SUB. "Today's event reflects our unwavering commitment to environmental education and sustainable practices. Together, we can make a significant impact on our ecosystem through concerted efforts in land restoration."

UIU holds post-budget discussion programme 2024-2025

The BBA Program Office of the School of Business and Economics of United International University (UIU) organised the Post-Budget Discussion Program 2024-2025 on June 8 at the UIU campus.

AK Azad, Member of Parliament and Chairman, CEO, and Managing Director, Ha-Meem Group, was present as the chief guest. Prof. Dr Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) was present as the key note speaker. The event was presided by Prof. Dr Md Abul Kashem Mia, Vice-Chancellor of UIU. The welcome address was delivered by Prof. Dr Salma Karim, Director of BBA Program, UIU and the vote of thanks was delivered by Prof. Dr Mohammad Musa, Dean, School of Business & Economics, UIU.

Dr Mohammad Abdur Razzak, Chairman, Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), Mahbub Ahmed, Former Secretary (Finance), Government of Bangladesh, and Prof. Dr Mohammad Omar Farooq, Head, Department of Economics, UIU were present as respected discussants in the session. The panelists presented their valuable views on various possibilities and issues along with a detailed discussion on the Bangladesh Budget 2024-25.

AK Azad said that the development sector budget is very important to make the country's economy stronger. But in this year's budget in Bangladesh, the allocation for the development



sector has been very low. For public welfare budgeting, all kinds of irregularities should be removed and government accountability should be ensured. He also said that we have to remove social differences, otherwise the society or the state system will collapse. That is why everyone should be given equal importance in the budget.

Prof. Dr Mustafizur Rahman said, "Our budget is much smaller than other countries in the world. This year's budget has been made without matching with real work. In our country, payments start before the completion of the highest projects. Therefore, a major part of the revenue has to be used for repayment of debt finance."

He also said that this year's budget should focus on the purchasing power of people and make social programs more dynamic.

■ CAMPUS LIFE ■

SEXISM IN OUR UNIVERSITIES

A sobering reality

ARIZA AFNAN

In recent times, women's achievements in education have been making headlines in news portals and media outlets almost every other day. Women's participation in education appears to be at an all-time high and continuously growing, the gender disparity is decreasing day by day in every important evaluation. These statistics may give one the impression that misogyny in education has been left in the olden days, when the reality is anything but.

Women's access to education and social acceptance have improved to a great degree, without a doubt. That isn't to say women's access to higher education doesn't contain many socioeconomic impediments, but even for the percentage of female students who have the privilege of pursuing higher education, certain biases and prejudices continue to persist.

These prejudices take on many forms, starting from seemingly harmless remarks but oftentimes escalating to harassment. Women also face significant discrimination in terms of academics itself, thanks to the pre-existing bias that they're less competent than their male peers.

Maria Gomes, an alumnus of BRAC University (BRACU), recounts an incident from her undergraduate days, "I was taking a Physics course, and on the day our graded test papers were being returned I went to class dressed up. During a discussion about the correct answers, the faculty member sees it fit to look at me and crack a joke about how only dressing up will not fetch me good marks. I had actually scored 9/10 in that test."

This manner of internalised sexism is especially prevalent in male dominated fields like engineering. Anisa Binte Asad, a student of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) in Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), speaks about the unfair bias she's often had to face during her journey, "During group projects in labs, I often feel ignored as most students tend to prefer male teammates. My other female classmates as well as my seniors can vouch for this, as we're always unwelcome in teams. Not to mention, there are a few teachers who will ignore the female students in class and place more importance on the male students, going as far as to insist upon speaking to the absent male class representative over a present female one. My male classmates have also used the word 'woman' derogatorily while arguing amidst themselves."

These situations are often difficult to tackle, as they're often more implicit than outright. "There's rarely anything you can do about these situations. You can't just ask things like 'why don't you want me in your team, is it because I'm a woman?'" adds Anisa.

While it may not be possible to completely eradicate the invisible bias, it's at least expected that faculty members and authority figures should create an environment conducive to the learning of all students, regardless of their gender identity or socioeconomic status. Regrettably, such isn't always the case. Even

though most teachers tend to diligently perform their duties of educating students fairly, a small percentage continue to perpetuate the prejudice. As they are in a position of power, these incidents tend to hold more weight and affect female students negatively.

Tawa Choudhury*, a student of Canadian University of Bangladesh, speaks about incidents he has observed. "A faculty member in my university had to be fired due to multiple complaints against him. In order to appear relatable to the class, he went on to call a female student a gold digger, whereas her only fault was in being conventionally pretty. Such subtle misogynistic jokes are passed along every other day, and if anyone speaks up about it, they're told that there is no need to be serious as it's only just humour."

Asmita Mehefin, a student of Biotechnology in BRACU, talks about how demotivating it can be to be

on the receiving end of discriminatory discourse. "I'm in a female dominated programme, and in my class a teacher mentioned that women shouldn't study subjects like business at all, as fields like biology are more suitable for them. In her opinion, women are good at only sitting and studying rather than starting businesses."

Preconceptions such as this tend to affect women who study in male dominated fields. According to Asmita, her female friends in the Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) department tend to face such prejudices disproportionately. Not to mention, situations may escalate to the point where the safety of female students may directly be under threat.

"A friend of mine once rejected the advances of a fellow student who happened to be my acquaintance.

These situations are often difficult to tackle, as they're often more implicit than outright. "There's rarely anything you can do about these situations. You can't just ask things like 'why don't you want me in your team, is it because I'm a woman?'" adds Anisa.

He proceeded to stalk her, going as far as to record her without consent. She felt paranoid for a long time about her safety and privacy after she came to know about this incident. There have even been instances where a male student would find the contact numbers of his female classmates and harass them over text," further shares Asmita.

This discrimination doesn't only stop with women, oftentimes affecting queer students as well. Tawa recounts an experience where the expelled faculty member called a male student a *hijra* derogatorily.

Asmita mentions, "An acquaintance of mine, shortly after returning from TARC, told me in a rather mocking tone that she was in disbelief that a transgender person was allowed to conduct a philosophy course."

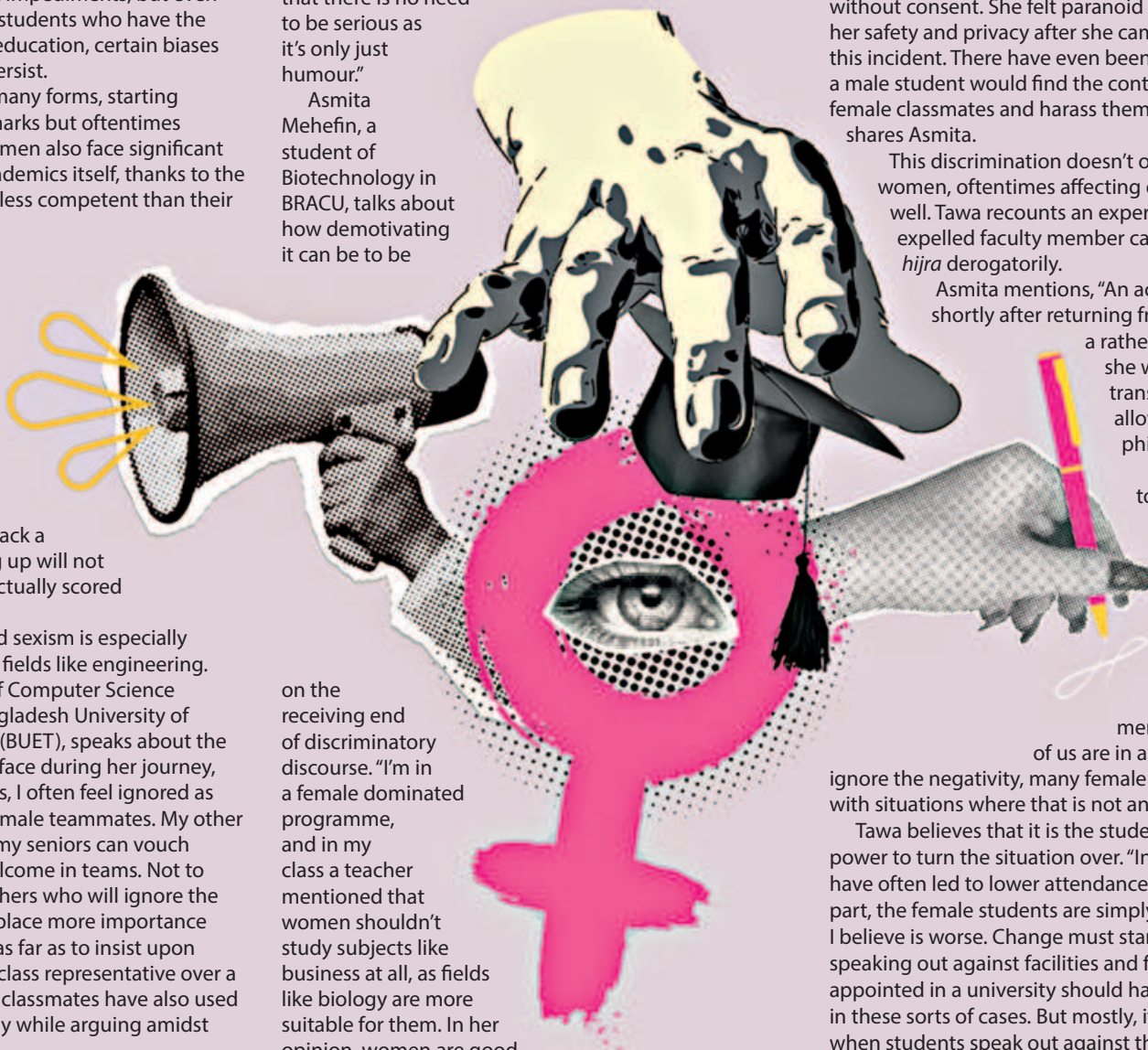
Many of us continue to brush off minor incidents of sexism as we pursue our education, but not doing anything about it makes a change in the status quo unlikely. Not to mention, while some

of us are in a position to simply ignore the negativity, many female students are faced with situations where that is not an option.

Tawa believes that it is the students who have the power to turn the situation over. "Incidents like this have often led to lower attendances, but for the most part, the female students are simply used to it, which I believe is worse. Change must start with students speaking out against facilities and facilities that are appointed in a university should have to have clearance in these sorts of cases. But mostly, it's more impactful when students speak out against these things because students actually have much more power in these cases," he opines.

In Asmita's words, "Firstly, we must look after the students. If the privacy or safety of a female student is violated, action must be taken against it. An increased awareness may also help in improving the situation."

To sustain women's progress in education, it must first be ensured female students are being treated fairly and provided with a safe environment. Participation alone cannot be the only quotient to judge women's standings in education.



■ INTERVIEWS ■

More opportunities for a globalised education than ever before

In conversation with Professor Catherine Jackson, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Central Lancashire



PHOTO: COURTESY

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

Universal College Bangladesh (UCB) has recently partnered with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). A signing ceremony took place on June 1 at the UCB campus in Gulshan, Dhaka. In the attendance of Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury and British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke, Chairman of UCB Board of Directors Bob Kundanmal and Pro-Vice Chancellor of UCLan Prof. Catherine Jackson signed the agreement for their respective organisations.

Bangladeshi students doing our courses here will have access to all of our online resources that students from UCLan have, including our library, digital, and film resources. Additionally, we create communities of students doing the same courses using technology, allowing all our students to come together as learners.

At the event, *Campus* had the opportunity to sit down with Prof. Jackson to discuss pressing issues in the educational sector in Bangladesh and the merits of international collaborations.

Campus (C): How can Bangladeshi students benefit from online resources to attain competitive knowledge and skills?

Catherine Jackson (CJ): Bangladeshi students doing our courses here will have access to all of our online resources that students from UCLan have, including our library, digital, and film resources. Additionally, we create communities of students doing the same courses using technology, allowing all our students to come together as learners. Such an experience would allow students to see that there is a context to all of their learning. In the future, we are also looking at using holographic technology to transport our

lecturers wherever in the world.

C: The point on the increased opportunities for international collaboration is such a unique perspective, and it makes me very excited for what we have in store for education. Do you think such international collaboration will lead to expanded perspectives for our students?

CJ: Absolutely. We do it already, even in the UK, we have three campus sites and we teach those campus sites together using one educator or teacher, who could be located anywhere in the world. Hence, we can bring the best teachers and experts to teach our students. The students have access to a wide range of different perspectives. This is important because the present generation will, in all probability, be working all over the world. And we want to prepare all of our students to be able to work anywhere in the world.

C: What would, if any, be the differences between the UCLan programmes offered at UCB and the ones offered directly at UCLan?

CJ: When working with partners like UCB, the first thing we do is fully validate our programmes. A team is arriving in three weeks to look into everything at UCB and ensure that the quality of all educational services provided here is of the same standards as those in the UK.

Then, we contextualise that learning, so that while our students will have the same learning experiences, it will be contextualised to Bangladesh so that they can understand the issues or problems to solve in Bangladesh, not necessarily in the UK because they may have no experience in the UK.

The assessments, however, would be the same. Our students will be able to transfer if they like. So, they can do a year in Bangladesh and then transfer to the UK for their second year. The course is the same anywhere you go; we simply try to cater to the individual contexts of different countries.

C: You may be aware that Bangladesh is one of the emerging countries blessed with a demographic dividend. What role can quality higher education play in growing the dividend and also enhance the employability of Bangladeshi students?

CJ: You're right, we can see that Bangladesh is a very vibrant nation. It is also a young nation that wants to develop well. We are working with UCB to ensure that the students in Bangladesh are getting maximum opportunities for working anywhere in the world, and part of that process is delivering our highest

standards of education. It is also working with the employers here in Bangladesh and globally to ensure that we are fitting our graduates for work, by working very closely with those employers to give them the opportunities. So, looking at things like internships and opportunities for students from Bangladesh to come to the UK to do summer school. We run, for instance, an engineering and science summer school in the UK, where Bangladeshi students could come and learn about real-world problems that they'd need to solve in the industry.

Hopefully, we can ensure that the graduates coming from a UCLan programme at UCB will have all the opportunities that is possible to have globally.

C: As the Pro-VC of UCLan, you are responsible for health and campus development. What are your thoughts on healthcare awareness and services on campus for Bangladeshi educational institutions?

CJ: I am very excited to strategically look at how we can further develop the course portfolio from the UK. It is important to not just have elements of education and knowledge, but also to provide answers to the questions: how do students look after themselves? How do they develop resilience? How do they develop a healthy work-life balance? How do they develop healthy eating habits? To be successful, not only as a student but also as a graduate working in a very fast-paced environment, you'll need to have those skills.

C: Indeed, as a young person, it really excites me how we are moving away from the old mentality of hustling, grinding, and studying very hard to get the best jobs out there to a more holistic and healthy approach to work and life.

CJ: You know, industries are looking at this as well. They are learning that if you only hire the people who work the hardest and have the most textbook knowledge, they might only last a year or two and then burn out. So, they are looking for graduates who can stay with the company and grow and develop with the company, which is what most companies want because it is expensive to keep employing people. And you do need those skills yourself. You do need a work-life balance. You do need to understand how to be resilient when life is not going well.

I think people who succeed, even at university, are the ones who have developed those skills. They are just as important, if not more than actually picking up the knowledge.