

ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

Startups seek reforms and stability from new government

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MD. ZAHIDUR RABBI

With the interim government headed by Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus taking oath on August 8 after the ousting of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, the startup community in the country is expressing cautious optimism and demands for the new interim government. As the interim government settles in, entrepreneurs are calling for policy reforms, improved access to funding, and a corruption-free environment to foster innovation and growth.

“We have been waiting for this change”, said Anayet Rashid, Founder and CEO of Truck Lagbe. Mentioning the 10 Minute School incident amidst the ongoing movement, Anayet said, “What happened with 10 Minute School was a wake up call for us. It was a clear message that either you work with power or you face the consequences.” Earlier on July 16, Startup Bangladesh Limited announced that it had cancelled an investment proposal of BDT 5 crore for 10 Minute School, Bangladesh’s largest edtech platform, after Ayman Sadiq, 10 Minute School’s Founder and CEO, had sided with the students during the ongoing students’ movement.

Anayet also added that the startup community in Bangladesh hopes for positive

changes by the interim government. He said, “We welcome the young leadership in the interim government. There is much work that needs to be done. Some of the existing policies and laws need to align with the current reality of Bangladesh.”

“Many of us had to register our company in other countries in order to attract foreign investments. Moreover, the share market in Bangladesh was also very unstable. All of these matters need to be addressed. We must have open dialogues with the leaders against corruption and extortion,” he added.

Nourin Haque Ridi, Founder of Dark Kak said, “As a new startup, we seek more equitable access to funding support from the government. Currently, only a few high-profile startups receive substantial financial backing and marketing assistance from government agencies, while many others struggle with funding, navigating complex registration, and dealing with the tax system. We call for a more transparent and fair distribution of grants and a corruption-free, politically unbiased environment that fosters collaboration rather than competition among startups.”

Mentioning the need of support for women entrepreneurs she added, “There is a critical need for targeted support for women entrepreneurs, particularly indigenous

women and those from rural areas, to ensure they receive the guidance and funding necessary to succeed. We urge the government to incentivise industries to engage domestic and politically unbiased startups in various sectors to drive technological, environmental, and cultural advancements, rather than relying on international support.”

Gaining the confidence of investors is a crucial step when it comes to the startup ecosystem. Foreign investment is also necessary for the improvement of startups in Bangladesh. Regarding this matter, Fahad Ifaz, Co-founder and CEO of iFarmer says, “The interim government must try to regain investor confidence in Bangladesh. I hope [Dr] Muhammad Yunus will be able to help Bangladesh regarding this matter through his good image and networks. The proper implementation of policies and laws is a must which the previous government failed.”

Fahad also talked about how the recent political crisis has impacted businesses. He added, “The recent election and the current political scenario has negatively impacted all the businesses. If the banks make funding easier for the local startups that would be a huge help. It would also be helpful for the startups if the government exempts taxes for one year.”

JOBS OF THE WEEK

Standard Chartered Bank
Business Development Officer
Deadline: N/A
Eligibility:
Minimum Bachelor's degree with some prior experience.
Minimum experience: 1-2 years



Radiant Pharmaceuticals Limited
Executive, Medical Marketing
Deadline: August 17
Eligibility:
MBBS from a public medical college or a reputable private medical college with valid BMDC registration.
Minimum experience: 2 years



British Council
Financial Planning Analyst
Deadline: August 20
Eligibility:
Prior experience in operational financial management and/or management accounting.
Minimum experience: 4 years



Care Bangladesh
Senior Technical Lead, Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
Deadline: August 20
Eligibility:
Master's degree in gender, women's studies, law, sociology, international development, social work, or related field.
Minimum experience: 6-8 years



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“Every new beginning comes from other beginning's end.”

SENECA

A 30-something's guide to modern job hunting

Interviews in your 30s may focus more on your leadership abilities, strategic thinking, and how you handle complex situations. Prepare examples that demonstrate your problem-solving skills, leadership experience, and adaptability. Practise articulating how your experience aligns with the company's goals.

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

Whether you were suddenly let go of your previous job or looking to start anew, job hunting in your 30s can be an especially difficult experience. Not only do you have to update your resume to include currently relevant skills, chances are, skills that you honed when you were younger might not be considered important by modern employers. But, being thrust into the vicious world of job hunting, there isn't the time to upskill yourself. So, what do you do? Here is a quick breakdown of some challenges and strategies you should be aware of when looking for a new job in your 30s.

The struggles you might face
Applying to an entry-level job at a late age is an automatic handicap; as your CV is competing with a slew of resumes from hungry, enthusiastic freshers. “When applying for jobs in my 30s, the biggest challenge I faced was that my resume got buried under that of many others, and I never got a call from most places I applied to,” says Hasin Rahman, Lecturer at Daffodil International University's Nutrition and Food Engineering Department.

Older applicants often struggle with a key thing employers look for: adaptability. Even though most modern companies will have the resources to train even an older applicant, they will need to know if you are worth the investment. As such, being open to learning and maintaining the ability to adjust to

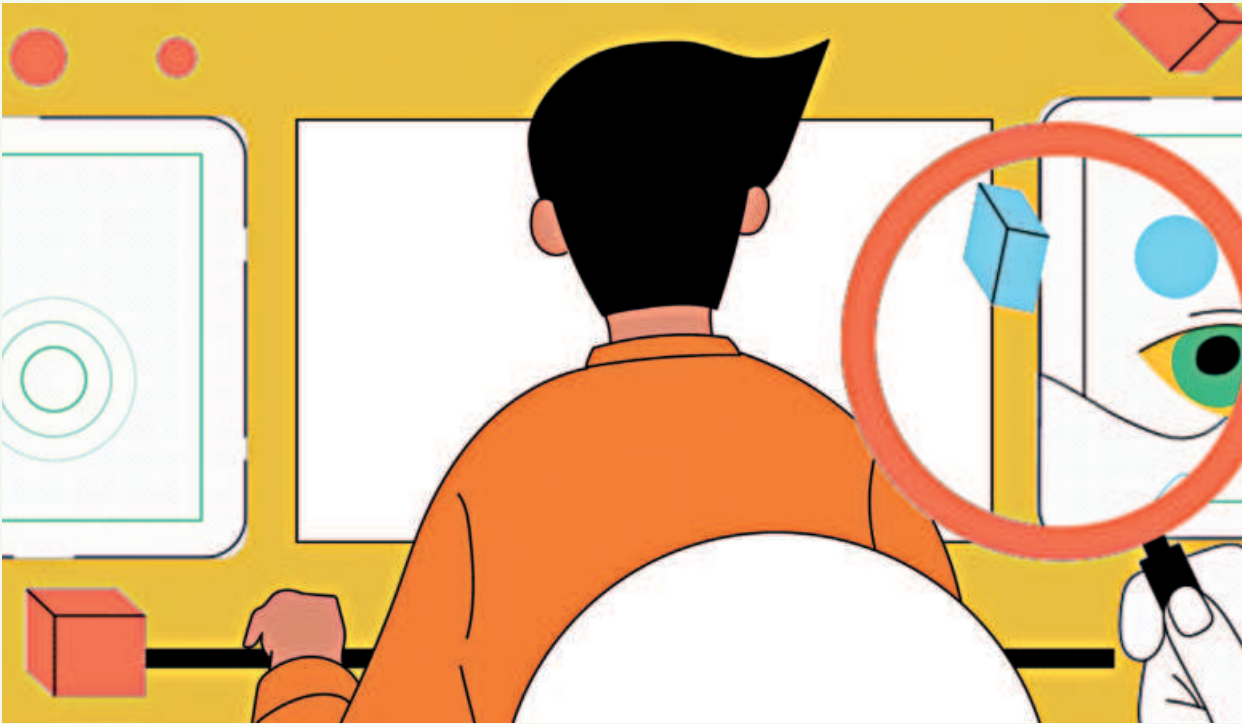


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people of different backgrounds are crucial skills to hone. “The easier it will be to train you, the easier it will be for your hiring team to envision you as a mentor someday,” says Susmita Shahreen Newaz, Senior HR Generalist at SELISE Digital Platforms.

Another big roadblock is the age bias that comes with many entry-level positions, especially in Bangladesh where most government jobs have a strict age limit of 30. As per a 2022

article on workplace age bias in Harvard Business Review, studies show nearly 65% of US workers reporting have experienced age-based discrimination. However, such incidents occur to much older workers, typically those aged 50 and above, and are not as commonly seen in new applicants aged in their 30s.

So, how to overcome these challenges?
When your old field isn't cutting it,

maybe it's time to consider branching out. Hasin, who got a call from his current workplace after applying to several places for many months, says, “If an applicant can demonstrate their problem solving, communication, and leadership skills to a potential employer, their major will start to matter less. This is especially true for the corporate sector when branching out.”

Since some selection panels want

to be assured that although you are starting late, you weren't sitting around before, it is important to clarify career and education gaps in both your resume and cover letter. List skills you have picked up at previous jobs, and explain how those skills will make you a valuable employee at the new place.

To those applying late to new jobs, Susmita advises them to keep a clear and concise CV. “Mention the reasons it took so long for you to start in your cover letter. Or, if you are switching lanes and are having to start from the bottom in your new sector, mention your previous experiences in your CV, regardless of relevance.”

Even if you don't feel confident applying to a new job in your 30s, keep hope in your solid foundation of experience and resources that you have cultivated so far. Research new industries that interest you and consider how your existing skills can be transferred. Networking with professionals in your desired field can also provide valuable insights.

If nothing else works, maybe it's time to step back and actually attempt upskilling. Set aside time to assess your skills and identify areas for growth. Continuous learning is key to staying competitive, after all. Invest in your professional development by taking courses, earning certifications, or pursuing an advanced degree. By addressing the challenges and capitalising on the opportunities unique to this stage of life, you can find a fulfilling job - even in your 30s!