



FILE VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

The job market is crying for reforms



Abu Afsarul Haider is an entrepreneur. He can be reached at ajfsarulhaider@gmail.com.

ABU AFSARUL HAIDER

“Will I find a good job after I graduate?” This is the most pressing concern for more than 6.5 lakh university graduates who enter the job market in Bangladesh every year. According to a 2019 World Bank report, one in three graduates remains unemployed one or two years after graduation. Around 20 lakh young people join the job market annually, and they do not fare much better. Most, if not all, find employment in the informal sector, which is insecure, poorly paid, and lacks social protection. In fact, only one in five workers are in wage employment, and less than 40 percent of them have a written contract. Finding a decent job in present day Bangladesh is a significant challenge, which is worrying in a country where 65.53 percent of the population falls within the working age bracket (15-64 years), according to the 2022 census. The number of unemployed people in the country stands at more than 26 lakh as of 2023, per the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data.

Creating new jobs requires increased investments and the establishment of new businesses. However, despite steady economic growth over the past decade, investment in Bangladesh remains lower than that of its regional peers. The public investment to GDP ratio for infrastructure and social services stood at 7.32 percent in FY2021, slightly rising to 7.53 percent in FY2022, but then dropping to 6.77 percent in FY2023. While public spending on infrastructure, especially megaprojects, has increased, it has not significantly attracted private investments, whether local or foreign. The private investment to GDP ratio was 25.25 percent in FY2019, dropped sharply to 20.24 percent the following year, and then fluctuated, reaching 23.70 percent in FY2021, 24.51 percent in FY2022, 24.18 percent in FY 2023, and 23.51 percent in FY2024, according to the latest BBS data. Bangladesh is also lagging in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). In FY2023, the country received around \$3.2 billion in FDI, which amounted to only around one percent of GDP—one of the lowest rates in Asia.

Successive governments have claimed to prioritise investment promotion, yet the ground reality tells a different story. Industry experts point out gaps in both the

comprehensiveness of policies and their implementation, especially concerning the private sector and investors. Bureaucratic hurdles frequently frustrate business operations, with challenges such as excessive red tape, inadequate infrastructure, inconsistent energy supply, corruption, underdeveloped funds and capital market, a complicated tax system, and delays in decision-making. Hidden costs related to policies, procedures, laws and infrastructure further inflate the cost of doing business. These obstacles particularly hinder small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial for job creation, from growing and scaling up.

Promises from successive governments to make Bangladesh a business-friendly country and create jobs for all have largely been unfulfilled. Corruption, injustice, and a lack of meaningful reform have plagued the country for far too long. A turning point seemed to arrive on August 5, 2024, when the government of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fell, and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus took charge of the interim government. Prof Yunus, known for his visionary approach to social and economic change, has called for a break from the rigid, outdated political practices holding the country back. His pledge to create a “new Bangladesh,” driven by creativity, public interest, and genuine reforms, has sparked hope among the citizens.

This interim period presents a unique opportunity for Prof Yunus and his team to lay the groundwork for a truly business-friendly Bangladesh. Tackling the issues mentioned earlier in a sustainable manner, they must develop policies that foster an environment conducive to economic growth, social progress, and environmental sustainability. However, setting the right policies is only part of the solution; they also need to collaborate with the private sector, educational institutions, and international organisations to build a comprehensive strategy for job creation. There are several critical areas that require attention. First, public sector reforms are essential. Jobs in this sector must be allocated based on merit, free from political interference. Implementing transparent hiring processes can

help restore public confidence in government employment.

Second, an overhaul of the education system is crucial to align it with market demands. Currently, the curriculum is disconnected from industry needs. While schools and colleges worldwide emphasise soft skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and decision-making, Bangladesh’s education system remains outdated. This gap results in employers’ reluctance to hire graduates from local institutions, worsening unemployment rates. By improving collaboration between educational institutions and industries, and by aligning training programmes with market requirements, we can bridge this gap and create a more job-ready workforce.

Third, promoting entrepreneurship is vital. The government should ease access to finance, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and offer incentives for startups and SMEs. A business-friendly environment—marked by reduced red tape, improved credit access, and minimal interference—will drive growth in these sectors and expand job creation.

Fourth, diversifying the manufacturing and services sectors with a focus on expanding exports and attracting FDI could generate millions of jobs. To boost investment inflows, the interim government must address the high cost of doing business and implement policies that safeguard the rights of enterprises, workers, and consumers. Furthermore, ensuring a stable political environment is crucial to attract both domestic and foreign investment.

Finally, job creation efforts must be inclusive, targeting both urban and rural areas. In rural regions, where many depend on agriculture, diversifying the economy through agro-processing and rural SMEs can absorb the underemployed workforce.

While the current situation presents numerous challenges, Chief Adviser Prof Yunus is uniquely positioned to reshape Bangladesh’s economic future. His extensive network of global connections, including world leaders, international organisations and influential policymakers give him the leverage needed to promote Bangladesh as an investment hub. By advocating for increased imports of Bangladeshi goods and attracting investments in critical sectors like manufacturing, tourism, infrastructure, technology, and power, the chief adviser can facilitate large-scale job creation and economic opportunities for the people of the country. This influx of foreign capital is not just an economic necessity, but also crucial for the broader social and economic stability of the country.

Why we need democratic policing



Muhammad Nurul Huda is former IGP of Bangladesh Police.

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

There is no denying that the fall of an insensitive and autocratic regime in Bangladesh has been caused by a multiplicity of factors, prominent amongst which is the decay and incompetence of regulatory institutions, with the police being the most visible culprit. Why has the organisation failed to act in accordance with the spirit of our constitution? Why are the deficits in democratic policing so glaring?

Looking back, one would find that policing in the subcontinent, including Bangladesh, was modelled after the militaristic Irish constabulary rather than the civilian London metropolitan model. This was deliberately done by the British colonial rulers to subjugate large and hostile populations with a relatively small force. Such a force answered predominantly to the regime in power and its bureaucracy, not to the people.

Personnel in this arrangement naturally felt responsible for controlling populations rather than protecting the community, and sought to secure the interests of the dominant group. They were required to remain outside and distinct from the community and were extremely hierarchical in structure, where loyalty was directed towards leadership and establishment rather than the rule of law.

Curiously, all South Asian governments have largely retained this colonial structure of policing. No wonder, therefore, that there continues to be a strict hierarchical division between officers and constabulary throughout South Asia. The former are often well-educated and relatively well-paid, while the latter suffer from lamentable working conditions.

Democratic policing is a concept that has emerged in recent times to describe the characteristics of policing in a democracy, where the police serve the people of the country rather than the regime. In Bangladesh, the police need to serve and protect rather than impede freedoms. Our police should not concern themselves with people’s beliefs or associates, their movements, or conformity to party ideology. It should not be too much to expect that our police remain primarily committed to preserving community safety and applying criminal law equally to all people, without fear or favour.

Democratic policing requires a normative framework for the organisation. It should provide a common reference point for civil society, policymakers, international partners, and the police itself. Our democratic police must be characterised by an orientation to serve society—transparency and accountability must permeate the organisation. Personnel in such an outfit must reflect the demographic make-up of the country and be insulated from undue political influence. In addition, they should be equipped with the skills to perform their tasks effectively and efficiently, exhibiting professionalism throughout the organisation.

These values must be considered non-negotiable, as without them, police organisations cannot be democratic in their structure,

The ‘ruler supportive’ character of our police emerged when the governing elite of a decolonised society decided to retain the inherited police organisation, ignoring justified demands for change.

culture, or performance. A realisation must dawn that democratic policing is not just about maintaining law and order. It is about establishing and nurturing a healthy relationship with the community, based on mutual respect and understanding. The police must provide service as a means to uphold the law rather than using force to impose the law.

One may ask why we lacked democratic policing thus far despite having a republican constitution. The answer to this question lies in the fact that after independence, we retained colonial administrative, police, and judicial structures without adapting them to the changing situation. The “ruler supportive” character of our police

emerged when the governing elite of a decolonised society decided to retain the inherited police organisation, ignoring justified demands for change.

A cynical view that cannot be entirely dismissed is that our politicians were attracted to the administrative and police system established by colonial powers and enjoyed exercising power and authority, disregarding their own demands for far-reaching administrative reforms. All political parties have exercised influence over police postings, promotions, and transfers, as well as the deployment of police during strikes, demonstrations, and elections. They did not want to professionalise the service, as control over it is central to political conflict in a divided society.

Additionally, the blanket power of superintendence vested in the government by the Police Act, 1861, is inappropriate in a democracy. And the role of intelligence agencies has not been redefined to protect the fundamental right to freedom of association, expression, and movement. The police in Bangladesh still monitor all political activities without discrimination, excluding only the ruling party of the day, which gives them authoritarian powers antithetical to the democratic spirit.

Under these circumstances, we need to define the contours of the political executive-police relationship. The powers and responsibilities of each entity must be properly articulated. A careful balance must be struck between legitimate supervision of the police by the political executive and illegitimate interference and influence. It is important to carefully define what superintendence means to ensure that the power of the executive is conditioned while allowing the police operational autonomy under the law.

At present, there is very little effective oversight of police conduct. For democratic policing to be meaningful, there must be transparent and functional external accountability mechanisms compliant with international best practices. And parliament should constantly oversee the effectiveness of policing.

Policing is a public responsibility wherein the powerless are often pitted against the powerful. The interplay between the public and the police is usually more immediate, intense, and frequent than interactions with the judiciary, other parts of the bureaucracy, or the political class. Therefore, without substantial reforms, policing will continue to undermine security and, consequently, our democratic foundation.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Volume
5 Sacred beetle
11 Notorious czar
12 State without proof
13 Uncool fellow
14 Obstructed
15 Pendulum path
16 Blocks up
17 Short poem
19 Kitten cry
22 Do a butler's job
24 Town center
26 Goatee setting
27 Makes mistakes
28 Tirades
30 News summary
31 Chick holder
32 Suppress
34 Obligation
35 Deli meat
38 Financially solvent
41 Washed out
42 South Dakota capital
43 Open space
44 Grade school book
45 Phone message

DOWN

1 Singer Turner
2 Finished
3 Sousa nickname, with "the"
4 Wrap up
5 Man at the wheel
6 Stop talking
7 Some charity
8 "Stand" band
9 Long time
10 Sleep spot
16 Clamor
18 "— No Sunshine"
19 Mad Hatter's friend
20 Poet Pound
21 Hornet's kin
22 Plot unit
23 Uneven hairdo
25 Sediment
29 Town center
30 Bright beam
33 Say
34 Frosh quarters
36 Baseball's Rodriguez
37 Substance
38 Tablet download
39 Fragrant tree
40 Oahu garland
41 Light touch

Write for us. Send us your opinion pieces to dsopinion@gmail.com

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

P	S	S	T		P	A	R	I	S
E	Q	U	A	L		I	R	E	N
S	U	B	J	E	C	T	C	A	S
T	I	S	T	R		Y		D	A
O	D	E	S	S	A		R	U	N
	S	T	A	I	N		O	P	E
			I	N	K	E			
K	A	R	L		C	R	I	M	P
I	V	E	S		A	N	N	U	A
N	A	P			U	S	E		T
G	L	A	S	S	E		C	A	S
M	O	S	E	S		T			O
E	N	T	E	R		D	E	N	Y

The people’s Republic of Bangladesh

National Board of Revenue

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1:

National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization

IDEB Bhaban (10th floor),160/A, Kakrail, Dhaka

Memo no. 1(192) Active items/ Hardware /NSW/2024/2124

Date: 29.09.24

Subject: Addendum to bidding document for supply and Installation of Hardware and Infrastructure (network, communication, cabling etc.) and standard software for NSW solution; other network, communication equipment, structure, Hardware and cabling: Server & Storage and Network & Security components for NSW Server Room & DR. Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1: Request for Bids (RFB) No. NBR-GD2A.1.

Addendum No. 5

This is for the information of all Bidders concerned that the following amendments have been made for the procurement mentioned in the subject above;

Ref	Existing Entry	Amended entry
Sl No. of 6, SPN ITP-23.1 & 26.1	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: September 30, 2024, Time : 14.00 hours.	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: October 30, 2024, Time : 14.00 hours.
	Date & Time for Bid Opening September 30, 2024, Time :14:30 hours	Date & Time for Bid Opening October 30, 2024, Time :14:30 hours

All the terms and conditions of bidding Documents (RFB) NBR-GD2A.1 shall remain unchanged. This Addendum No. 5 shall be considered an integral part of the Bidding Documents and shall be binding on all Bidders who have obtained or will obtain the Bidding Documents from the Purchaser.

(Abul Bashar Md Shafiqur Rahman)
Project Director
Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1:
National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization
Email: pdnsw.nbr@gmail.com

GD- 557