

# REVERSE BRAIN DRAIN

## Just another trend or a real opportunity?



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

On the morning of August 4, social media was abuzz with the #reversebraindrainbd trend. Bangladeshi expatriates, many of whom had long left the country in search of better opportunities abroad, began to speak of returning home. They envisioned contributing to the reconstruction of a nation on the verge of new possibilities. The hashtag went viral, igniting conversations about what it would take for skilled professionals to come back and offer their expertise. It was a moment of collective hope—a window into what Bangladesh could become if its brightest minds returned to build the future they had always dreamed of.

But now, months later, it appears that the initial momentum has faded. The conversation seems to have stalled, and we are yet to see a tangible wave of skilled expatriates returning home to rebuild alongside us. What happened? Was the #reversebraindrainbd just another fleeting social media trend, or is it still possible to turn this vision into reality?

‘Brain drain’ is a term developing nations like Bangladesh are all too familiar with. For decades, we have watched as our best and brightest—engineers, doctors, entrepreneurs—have left for countries with better employment opportunities, higher salaries, and more stable political environments. The ‘brain drain’ has cost us dearly, with the country losing not just skilled professionals but also the intellectual capital needed to foster innovation and growth.

In contrast, ‘reverse brain drain’ refers to the return of these expatriates to their homeland. It is a phenomenon driven by various factors: visa expirations, family commitments, or, in some cases, the desire to make a difference in one’s own country. The promise of ‘reverse brain drain’ suggests a future where skilled individuals return to invest in their homeland, bringing with them the knowledge, experience, and global networks they have gained abroad. But the question remains: are we truly ready to

bring them back?

One of the central narratives driving the #reversebraindrainbd movement was patriotism. Many expatriates voiced a sense of duty to return home after the recent revolution. The message was clear: the time had come to build the nation we had all dreamed of—a Bangladesh that stood tall, free from corruption and political oppression, where opportunities for growth were abundant.

But while patriotism can be a strong motivator, it alone is not enough. For most expatriates, practical considerations weigh far more heavily than patriotic sentiment. After years of building successful careers abroad, the decision to return is not made lightly. Questions of job security, income stability, quality of life, and career growth are at the forefront of their minds. Many of them now wonder if Bangladesh can offer them the same opportunities they have grown accustomed to abroad, or if they will find themselves in a country still grappling with the same old challenges: bureaucracy, corruption, and economic uncertainty. Patriotism may ignite the desire to return, but it is the practical realities of day-to-day life that will ultimately determine whether these skilled professionals decide to make Bangladesh their permanent home again.

We need to ask ourselves: are we truly prepared to welcome these skilled expatriates back? The reality is that the infrastructure needed to support their return may not yet be in place. While the fall of the regime has opened new doors for political freedom, we still need to address the systemic issues that have long plagued the country. We have made significant strides in development over the past decade, but we cannot ignore the fact that certain sectors remain underdeveloped. For many expats, the decision to return will hinge on whether they can find meaningful employment or create their own opportunities in a relatively stable and supportive environment. Do we have the frameworks in place to support innovation?

Is the economy ready to absorb and retain top talent? These are questions we must answer if we want to turn the #reversebraindrainbd trend into a tangible reality. It is not enough to simply call for people to come home—we must actively work to create an environment where they can thrive.

Conversely, it must be understood that there would only be a few ready-made opportunities waiting for these people in Bangladesh. The beauty of our current situation is that there is potential for virtually unlimited opportunities to create something new. A generation of young people, many of whom once dreamed of leaving Bangladesh, have stayed to fight for the country’s future and are now actively working to rebuild the nation from the ground up. They have proven that change is possible, but they cannot do it alone from here. Our expatriates can make a difference—but not by waiting for perfect opportunities to fall into their laps. Instead, they must come back and create those opportunities themselves. The fall of the regime has cleared the way for innovation and new ideas. Whether it is starting a new business, launching a tech startup, or contributing to social welfare projects, now is the time for those with skills and experience to bring their ideas to life in Bangladesh.

We need our expatriates to return—not out of a sense of obligation or guilt, but because they see the potential in what we are building together. A nation is only as strong as the collective will of its people, both at home and abroad. And as we work to rebuild Bangladesh, we must do so with the knowledge that the challenges ahead are not insurmountable. It is time now to show the world what we are capable of when we come together to build something better.

To everyone who posted on social media about returning, I say this: now is the time to act. There are no ready-made opportunities, but there are endless possibilities waiting for those bold enough to create them. Come back, and let us build our dream nation together.

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## Toyota invests \$500 mln in electric air taxi startup

NEXT STEP DESK

Toyota has made a \$500 million investment in Joby Aviation, a California-based startup focused on developing electric air taxis. This latest investment brings Toyota’s total investment in the company to \$894 million, following a previous \$394 million capital injection in 2020.

The funding is aimed at helping Joby Aviation complete the Type 2 certification process with the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a critical step toward commercialising its electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft. The company is currently in the fourth of five certification stages and plans to launch its commercial air taxi service by 2025.

Toyota’s investment will be made in two equal tranches, with the first scheduled to close later this year and the second in 2025. The funds will be made in the form of cash for common stock, according to Toyota.



## Are you suffering from burnout? Watch out for these signs

NEXT STEP DESK

In today’s fast-paced, always-on work culture, job burnout has become increasingly common. The relentless pursuit to constantly perform at a satisfactory level can often blur the lines between work and personal life. Burnouts aren’t just about feeling tired or stressed, to many, it’s a chronic state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. Here are the top five indicators that you may be experiencing burnout in your professional life.

### Chronic exhaustion

The most obvious sign of burnout, chronic exhaustion persists even after a long rest, making it difficult to get through daily tasks. You may wake up feeling just as tired as when you went to bed, and even simple activities can feel overwhelmingly difficult. This type of exhaustion goes beyond physical tiredness; it also impacts your mental and emotional energy, leaving you feeling drained and unmotivated.

### Decreased productivity

Tasks that once came easily now seem insurmountable, and you may find yourself missing deadlines or struggling to keep up



IMAGE: PEXELS

with basic responsibilities. Concentration and decision-making become difficult, leading to mistakes or a lack of creativity. Despite working longer hours to try to catch up, it often feels like you are falling further behind, which only adds to the pre-existing frustration and helplessness.

### Emotional detachment

You may feel detached from your work, losing the passion or enthusiasm you once had. This often manifests as cynicism or apathy—you simply stop caring. Work feels like a chore rather than something that challenges or excites you. Emotional detachment can extend

to your relationships with coworkers, where you might avoid social interactions or disengage from teamwork.

### Increased irritability

When you are burned out, your emotional tolerance decreases, leading to heightened irritability and frustration. Minor setbacks or annoyances that you would normally brush off can now trigger strong emotional reactions. You may find yourself snapping at colleagues, friends, or family members for small issues, or feeling overwhelmed by problems that aren’t actually that big. This emotional volatility can strain your relationships and create tension both in and out of the workplace.

### Physical symptoms

Common physical symptoms of burnout include headaches, muscle tension, digestive problems, and sleep disturbances. You might find it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep, and even when you do rest, it doesn’t feel like you have had enough. Chronic stress can also weaken your immune system, making you more susceptible to colds and other illnesses. These physical symptoms are your body’s way of signalling that the stress has reached a critical level.

## OpenAI raises \$6.6 bln funding from Microsoft, Nvidia, and others

NEXT STEP DESK

OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, raised \$6.6 billion in new funding last week, attracting major investors including Microsoft, Nvidia, Thrive Capital, and Khosla Ventures.

The funding round, which includes contributions from other notable backers

like Altimeter Capital, SoftBank, and MGX, Abu Dhabi’s state-backed investment firm, could potentially value the company at \$157 billion, positioning it as one of the most valuable private companies in the world.

The funding comes in the form of convertible notes, meaning the investment will convert to equity if certain conditions are met. One such condition is a restructuring

that could change OpenAI from its current nonprofit-controlled model to a fully for-profit company.

The restructuring efforts are ongoing and may take time to complete, says the company. Investors have negotiated terms that allow them to claw back their capital or renegotiate the valuation if the necessary changes aren’t made within two years.

## JOBS SPOTLIGHT

### BRAC

Deputy Manager,  
Land, Estate

Deadline: October 11

#### Eligibility:

Postgraduate degree in any related subject from any recognised university but an LLB degree will be preferred.

Minimum experience: 3-5 years



### Grameenphone Ltd

ICT Product Manager

Deadline: October 9

#### Eligibility:

Bachelor’s degree in EEE, CSE from any reputed university. MBA is an added advantage.

Minimum experience: 4 years



### Robi Axiata Limited

Key Account Manager

Deadline: October 9

#### Eligibility:

Bachelor’s degree from any reputed university with proven experience in account management or business development.

Minimum experience: 6 years



### Square Pharmaceuticals PLC.

Digital Marketing Specialist

Deadline: October 11

#### Eligibility:

Bachelor’s degree in Marketing or a related field from a reputed university.

Minimum experience: 4 years



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“When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.”

PAULO COELHO

## 4 Bangladeshi startups selected for Accelerating Asia Ventures’ 10th cohort

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Accelerating Asia Ventures has announced its 10th cohort of startups, selecting nine companies from Southeast Asia, with four from Bangladesh: Chhaya, Palki Motors Limited, Pulse Tech Ltd., and Relaxy.

Chhaya is a tech-enabled micro-insurance provider that aims to improve financial inclusion by offering affordable insurance products to underserved populations.

Palki Motors, founded in 2022, focuses on providing sustainable transportation alternatives through locally manufactured electric vehicles, targeting pollution and rising fuel costs.

Pulse Tech Ltd. operates a B2B e-commerce platform for retail pharmacies, streamlining procurement processes and addressing supply chain inefficiencies.

Relaxy offers mental health resources by connecting users with therapists and creating a community support network.

Founded in 2019, Accelerating Asia supports early-stage startups across technology-driven sectors, providing mentorship, investment, and business development training. This year, the firm reported an acceptance rate of 1.8%, following an extensive evaluation process.