



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

Ushering in a new era of work

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MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The global job market is changing faster than ever before, driven by shifts in technology, demographics, and the rise of new industries. These changes are not just limited to advanced economies; they are impacting countries like ours, where rapid economic growth and a young, ambitious workforce are driving conversations about the future of work. While some job roles are charging forward, others are quietly fading into the background. The recent "Future of Jobs Report 2025" published by World Economic Forum provides critical insights into this new era of work, exploring how these changes are reshaping employment opportunities worldwide.

The first key takeaway is a surprising one: frontline and essential jobs are booming. Farmworkers, delivery drivers, and tradespeople in construction-related roles are expected to see massive growth. At first glance, this seems counterintuitive in a world obsessed with tech startups, cryptocurrency, and the metaverse. So why the rise in these roles? The answer lies in changing demographics. As populations age, particularly in developed countries, the demand for food security, efficient logistics, and infrastructure upgrades is climbing. Similarly, the rapid growth in the gig economy, powered by e-commerce and quick delivery systems, highlights why roles like light truck drivers and delivery workers are soaring in demand. With e-commerce global companies thriving in Bangladesh, the groundwork for this sector is already laid. The challenge now lies in creating safe, well-paying jobs that leverage technology for scalability.

On the other side of the coin, tech roles are unsurprisingly the golden ticket to future-proofing your career. AI specialists, data

scientists, and cybersecurity experts are becoming the architects of tomorrow's world. For a country like Bangladesh, where we are already making strides in IT outsourcing and software exports, this comes as excellent news. But here's the catch—not everyone is invited to the tech party. The reality is, a large portion of our workforce is stuck in low-skill or semi-skilled roles. Without urgent and widespread upskilling initiatives, we risk being left behind as the global economy embraces AI-driven transformation. What's more alarming is that some roles in tech are actually declining.

For example graphic designers suffer the most when tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E, and Canva Pro democratise creativity. Suddenly, anyone can whip up a professional-looking design, reducing the demand for full-time designers. For our growing freelance community, heavily reliant on graphic design and web development gigs, this could be a storm on the horizon.

The report mentions that traditional desk jobs are in decline. Cashiers, administrative assistants, and clerks—roles once considered stable—are being replaced by automation and self-service technology. Even professions like accounting and auditing, long viewed as unshakable, are beginning to feel the heat. This trend should serve as a wake-up call for the burgeoning middle class. For decades, the dream was simple: get a degree, land a desk job, and climb the corporate ladder. But as AI continues to take over routine tasks, the ladder is disappearing altogether. The question then becomes: how do we prepare for a future where stability is the exception, not the norm?

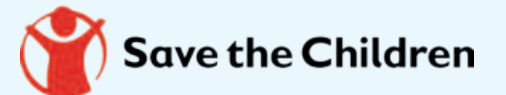
While technology charges ahead, the irony is that human skills like creativity, resilience, and collaboration are more valuable than ever. Employers are no longer just looking for workers

who can do the job; they want employees who can think critically, adapt quickly, and lead with empathy. For Bangladesh, this is both an opportunity and a challenge. We are uniquely positioned to capitalise on these global trends, but only if we act quickly and decisively. First of all, we need to invest in upskilling. Public and private partnerships must focus on providing affordable, accessible upskilling programs. From AI and data analytics to soft skills like leadership and resilience, the training needs to be relevant to both emerging technologies and evolving human roles.

Next, we need to prioritise the essential sectors. It is easy to get caught up in the buzz around tech, but let us not forget the basics. Agriculture, healthcare, and education are essential not just for our survival but for our growth as a nation. By modernising these sectors through innovation and investment, we can create millions of sustainable jobs while addressing critical societal needs. Finally, we need to foster entrepreneurship by reforming the startup ecosystem. With traditional career paths becoming less reliable, entrepreneurship could indeed become the safety net of the future. By supporting small businesses and startups, be it through funding, mentorship, or infrastructure, we can empower individuals to create their own opportunities and more jobs in the long run.

Amid all the disruption, one thing remains clear: change is not inherently bad. Yes, some jobs will disappear, but others will rise to take their place. For Bangladesh, the key lies in our ability to adapt. Currently, the global economy is playing musical chairs, and the music is speeding up. We can either scramble to find a seat when it stops or build a bigger, better chair before anyone else does.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT



Save the Children

Coordinator, Awards

Deadline: February 8

Eligibility:

• Masters in Finance/ Commerce/ Business/Social Science or relevant field with previous relevant experience.

Minimum experience: 5 years



Associate Officer, HR

Deadline: February 8

Eligibility:

• Bachelors, preferably in Human Resources/Public Administration/ Management/Business Administration/ other relevant field.

Minimum experience: 2 years



Transcom Electronics Ltd.

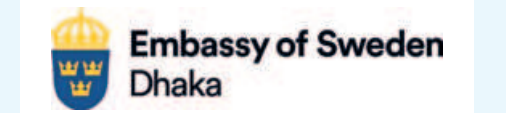
Territory Sales Manager

Deadline: February 10

Eligibility:

• Bachelors/Masters with previous working experience in dealer/distribution sales.

Minimum experience: 3-6 years



Embassy of Sweden, Dhaka

Trade Facilitator

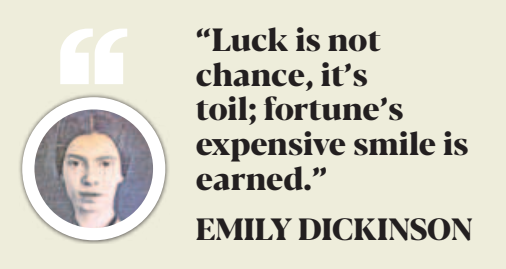
Deadline: February 17

Eligibility:

• University degree in Economics or Business Admin, or equivalent academic qualification.

Minimum experience: 2 years

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



Google ends diversity hiring goals

Google is stepping back from its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, including its goal to hire more employees from underrepresented groups. The move comes as part of a broader trend among US companies scaling back diversity programs, often in response to political and legal pressures.

According to a report by Reuters, in an email to staff on Wednesday, Google's parent company Alphabet's Chief People Officer Fiona Cicconi announced that the company would no longer set "aspirational hiring goals" for

increasing diversity. These goals were initially established in 2020 following widespread protests against racial injustice.

At the time, Google CEO Sundar Pichai pledged to increase the number of leaders from underrepresented groups by 30% by 2025, states Reuters. However, the company has not provided updated figures on its progress toward this goal. In 2021, Google began evaluating executive performance based on team diversity and inclusion, but recent changes suggest a shift in priorities, adds the report.

PHOTO: ALLEN BOGUSLAVSKY/PEXELS

Shikho aims to bring in the AI hype to ed-tech—here's how

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

This week, Shikho, a Bangladesh-based edtech company, introduced a beta version of Shikho AI, an artificial intelligence tool aimed at addressing educational gaps for Bengali-speaking students. The platform, which initially focuses on resolving academic doubts in Bengali, represents the company's first foray into AI-driven learning solutions. While access is currently limited to existing paid users, the long-term vision includes expanding to teachers, parents, and schools.

The tool relies on generative AI models fine-tuned for education, incorporating Bengali-language processing and reinforcement learning from human feedback. To understand its potential, The Daily Star spoke with Shahir Chowdhury, Shikho's founder and CEO, about the platform's development, challenges, and aspirations.

DS: What prompted the development of Shikho AI, and how does it fit into the broader educational landscape in Bangladesh?

Chowdhury: Bangladesh's education system faces two systemic issues: uneven access to resources and a lack of contextualised materials for Bengali speakers. While traditional edtech platforms have made strides, personalisation remains a hurdle. With advancements in AI, we saw an opportunity to address these gaps more dynamically.

Shikho AI builds on six years of curriculum-aligned content development here. The beta phase allows us to test solutions tailored to local needs, such as doubt-solving in Bengali. Our goal is not just to replicate existing models but to adapt them for scalability—first within Bangladesh, then potentially for Bengali-speaking populations globally.

DS: Why prioritise doubt-solving as the initial

focus?

Chowdhury: Doubt-solving is often where learning stalls, especially for students in large, under-resourced classrooms. Many learners struggle to get the support they need, either due to a lack of access to quality teachers or the sheer scale of the classroom environment. Many students avoid asking questions due to fear of judgment or limited access to instructors.



We want to break down this barrier by acting as a 24/7 co-pilot, providing a safe, private space for learners to ask any question without hesitation. This focus on doubt-solving addresses two critical challenges at once: removing the stigma of asking for help and delivering instant, accessible support.

DS: How does Shikho AI ensure response accuracy, given concerns about AI-generated errors?

Chowdhury: Accuracy is critical, especially in education. The AI combines curriculum-specific data with human oversight. A team of educators reviews outputs, and students can rate responses, creating a feedback loop to refine the model. This "human-in-the-loop" approach, used by other AI firms, aims to balance automation with quality control.

Students also have the option to rate responses, helping to refine the AI's capabilities over time. This feedback-driven model is similar to strategies used by leading AI companies, ensuring continuous enhancement of the system's performance.

DS: What measures are in place to ensure accessibility across socioeconomic groups?

Chowdhury: A freemium model will provide core features for free, while advanced tools may require payment. The platform is optimised for low-cost smartphones and minimal data usage—a necessity in regions with limited connectivity. Partnerships with NGOs and government bodies could broaden reach, though such discussions are ongoing.

DS: How might this technology reshape the role of teachers?

Chowdhury: Teachers often spend hours on administrative tasks like grading. By automating some workflows, Shikho AI could free up time for mentorship. For instance, the platform can generate student performance analytics, which might help educators identify struggling learners.

Our vision is to transform teachers into strategic facilitators, equipped with AI-driven insights to deliver more impact. In the future, we will expand to include tools tailored specifically to educators' needs, ensuring they benefit fully from the technology we are building.