DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 10, 2025, *CHAITRA 27, 1431 BS* | A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

CAMPUS

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ART AS A SIDE HUSTLE

and the students who make it work

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

MUSIC

RUBY

Jennie cements herself as a pop industry giant with debut album

SHAIKH SABIK KAMAL

One thing about BLACKPINK's Jennie is that she's THE it-girl. From fashion gigs to performance highlights, her ability to stand out with star quality is what truly makes her a celebrity. However, with her debut album, Jennie breaks free of all boundaries imposed on her to bloom as an artist.

Ruby, which is also her middle name, was released on March 7, 2025. Marking her first major release since her departure from YG Entertainment, the album, consisting of 15 tracks, solidifies the idea that Jennie, like other BLACKPINK members, was being held back artistically by her former agency.

The most enjoyable aspect of *Ruby* is its playful cohesiveness, which is preserved despite its genre diversity. Its 41-minute-long runtime does not feel insipid at all. Jennie's personality is engraved at the album's centre; even with many exciting features being present, her distinct voice remains vivid. Bold, ambitious, and genuine – these three words perhaps best describe *Ruby*.

Vocal features and rap are pleasantly blended in this album. One of the album's highlights, "ExtraL", featuring the Grammy-winning rapper Doechii, showcases this

blend while focusing on hip-hop. Among other features, "Love Hangover" with Dominic Fike is also a groovy and fun highlight. "Handlebars", featuring Dua Lipa, on the other hand, falls a bit short of delivering the same excitement. Nonetheless, it does not hinder the overall excellence of the album.

"Zen", for me, stands as the boldest track on the album, and its music video, directed by Cho Gi-seok, stands as an artistic masterpiece. Even though the lyricism in "Zen" could've been more standard, its other powerful aspects have secured the track as my personal favourite of the album.

Jennie's pen game in the album was probably one of its only inconsistent parts. Some tracks boast skillful displays of lyricism while others range from being just okay to being repetitive.

Overall, as a debut album, *Ruby* is simply marvellous. Exceeding expectations, it doesn't feel incomplete even with its short-length songs. *Ruby* sets optimistic eyes on Jennie's career as she takes on greater heights in the music industry, and I have a feeling she won't disappoint.

Editor & Publisher
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Features Editor and Head of Content Marketing
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Campus In-Charge
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Photographer
Orchid Chakma

Graphics & Layout
TDS Creative Graphics

Production
Shamim Chowdhury

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SATIRE

Bangali parent chooses to believe in random YouTuber over 100-year-old news channel

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

As the internet has reached nearly every household over the past decade, so has another commodity that is part and parcel of the World Wide Web—misinformation. And in a world where the youth struggle to verify the authenticity of news amid a web of misinformation, it seems that our parents have already found the answer. They have decided to place their indisputable trust in a random person with a pin mic in front of a green screen on YouTube rather than in international news portals.

"It's really easy to filter out which news is true and which isn't," explained Mr Gullib-al Hasan. "Whatever aligns with my political ideology and supports what I believe to be correct is true, and everything else is fabricated. Sure, I have no knowledge of the technologies involved in digital media fabrication whatsoever. I'm someone who unapologetically and unironically shared the picture of a woman building a house out of brinjals—only for my son to explain to me that it was an AI-generated image. But now that I know AI exists, I'm on a path of denying all forms of audio and visual evidence that disprove my ideology and blaming it all on AI without even knowing how it works. A leaked audio call proving my political leader was involved in a genocide? Fabricated! Video footage showing proof of a massacre? Edited! Hundreds of injured people carrying wounds from the shooting? The opposition did it! Filtering out the 'truth' from the internet is really easy when you're already blinded by an ideology."

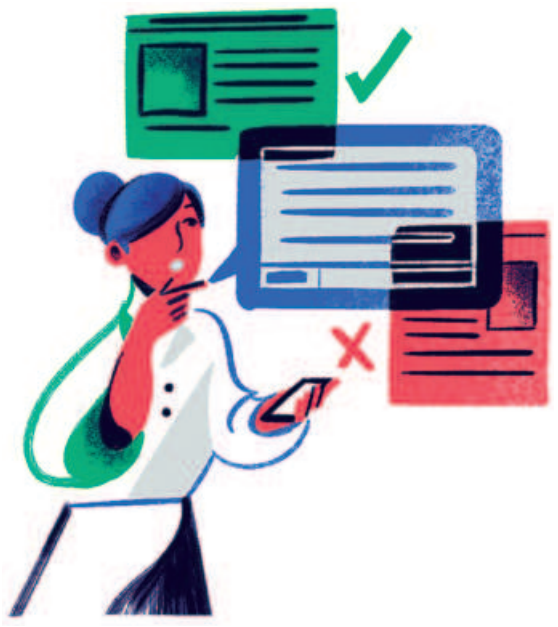
"The secret lies in absolute stubbornness," continued Mr Gullib-al. "Deny everything that goes against your argument. Put your trust in fabricated screenshots and random claims without proof, and if you keep lying to yourself long enough, hopefully, you'll start believing them. When the man in front of the green screen on YouTube spills out random information without any valid source or feeling the need to justify his claims, a part of me knows that it's all propaganda. But I've survived 16 years keeping that part of me suppressed. I couldn't have survived if I had allowed my conscience to ask these questions!"

"Here on Facebook, anyone can just log in and post whatever they want, so you know you're getting the news from the best sources out there," explained Mr Gullib-al.

However, experts suggest that Mr Gullib-al's tendency to believe misinformation has less to do with his age and more to do with his roots. According to Tarsera-verified psychologist Sigmund Fraud, "People here tend to believe in misinformation a lot. They're living proof that Bangladeshis' tendency to believe everything on the internet is connected to their nationality rather than their age."

Reach Ifti's spam mails at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

DESIGN: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**



HOW TO CHECK FOR MISINFORMATION/ DISINFORMATION ONLINE

Verify the source
Check if the website or publication is reputable, transparent about ownership, and has a history of factual reporting.

Cross-check with trusted outlets
Look for the same story on multiple credible news platforms. If it's only on one site, be cautious.

Analyse the language and tone
Sensationalist or emotionally charged language is often a red flag for misinformation or disinformation.

Inspect the date and context:
Ensure the information isn't outdated or taken out of context to mislead.

Use fact-checking tools
Certain websites or fact-checking tools can help confirm or debunk claims quickly.

Look into the author or organisation
Research their background to see if they are experts in the subject or have a potential bias.

ART AS A SIDE HUSTLE AND THE STUDENTS WHO MAKE IT WORK

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

We're often told that in order to retain the enjoyability of our hobbies, we should refrain from turning them into a means of income. While this sentiment is not unfounded, turning our hobbies into sources of income often means that we'll enjoy our downtime and simultaneously earn some cash. Of course, implementing this in reality isn't as easy as it sounds, especially for students who have academic responsibilities to carry out, as running a business takes up a great portion of time.

That isn't to say there aren't students who make it work. Running a business full-time is not feasible for most, but many students throughout the country have their own side hustles going. From selling baked goods or home-cooked foods to putting original artworks on sale- students have almost all bases covered. Selling artwork and crafts, specifically, is becoming more and more popular by the day. This can include digital and physical art such as canvas paintings and portraits, jewellery, crocheted items, trinkets, hand-embroidered items, etc. Some choose to utilise unorthodox art mediums as well, such as painting on stones or logs or other everyday items.

Social media lends students a lucrative platform to advertise and sell their products. Many artists have gotten their start by sharing a simple photo of their creations, and the enthusiastic reception from friends and acquaintances has given them the confidence to take on their business venture. Lahmee Tairim, a student of Finance at Dhaka University, is one such artist.

Lahmee owns a page called *bakbakummm* on Instagram and Facebook, where she shares and sells embroidered crafts such as jewellery, wall hangings, and other accessories. Being interested in needlework since childhood, she picked it back up as a way to fill her idle time, drawing inspiration from Pinterest and other platforms. When she shared her work on her personal social media pages, she received encouragement as well as customised orders from friends and acquaintances. This influenced her to start selling her craft, noticing a lack of embroidered jewellery in the market. However, being a full-time student, she has to work around her academic duties and is forced to limit herself to a certain number of orders per month.

"I love needlework, creating new designs using a needle is very fun, so I run this page as a hobby. Hence, I don't take that many orders, only about 15-16 pieces a month on average. Because of academics, I don't invest a lot of time in my tiny business. I spend around three to four hours on each piece."

Other than social media, fairs and festivals organised in universities is a good way for students to get their start. Tahsina Islam, a student of Pharmacy at BRAC University (BRACU), started her business at the fairs and events organised by the institution. Since then, she has branched her business outside her university, attending fairs hosted by other universities as well, and growing her online page. Her stall, *Protikritii,* is a versatile onewhereyou can find paintings on canvases, wood, and stone, as well as resin jewellery, key charms, and various other craft items.

"My friends were my biggest inspiration, whenever I crafted something new, they would tell me to start a business. When I saw students running their stalls at BRACU's fests, I decided to give it a try. Since my products are handmade, it's difficult to run a business on the side when my academics are on full throttle, which is why I'm not very active on my online page. When there's a fest imminent at BRACU, North South University, or East West University, I work for about 10-12 hours at a time. Generally, there's at least one fest a month, so I end up generating enough money for my pocket allowance and caretaking of my pets," says Tahsina.

Tahsina has plans for expansion beyond fairs and fests, hoping to one day run a showroom of her handmade products. Many students consider their small business a start for something they can hopefully grow into a much bigger venture. Owning a business is a beacon of hope for many as they seek to escape the cookie-cutter 9 to 5 life.

Nafisa Alam Toree, a student of Business and Technology Management at the Islamic University of Technology and the owner of *Arts by Toree*, hopes to expand her small business of selling paintings and focus on it long term. Finding catharsis in her art, she started her business with the motto "colours have the healing power".

PHOTOS: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

Nafisa shares, "I learned how to paint as a kid, but had to stop during college. Thanks to the immense pressure during my admission phase, I sought escape in my paintings. Encouragement from friends and family kept me going as I started selling paintings of the sky and mandalas. Eventually, faceless portraits based on photos sent in by customers became my most popular products, and I plan on expanding my art to other media as well."

While some have concrete plans to take their endeavours to higher heights in the future, some are just enjoying the ride as they go. Zakia Sultana Zannat, a former student of Mirpur Girls College, runs a page called *crochetouille.co*, where she sells her crocheted items.

"I used to make crocheted items for my friends as birthday gifts and eventually decided that I could try to get some money out of it since I didn't have any other jobs. I like crocheting, and so I thought maybe I could make people happy by making them customised crocheted products. I don't have a lot of followers yet, but I have had wonderful experiences with customers and even made new friends through running this business," Zakia says.

Crocheting is a time-consuming and intricate craft. While some products can be completed within two hours, Zakia says that some may take up to 48 hours, which is why the biggest challenge she faces is delivering her products on time.

She adds, "Growing my business eventually would be nice, but I'm not thinking of that yet as I am content with the work I do, and I would rather not compromise the quality of my work by taking too many orders at once. The name of my page is inspired by *Ratatouille*, which is a very cute and fun film. That is also how I want my page to be perceived, so the positive reviews and happiness of my customers upon receiving their products is what keeps me going."

A recurring theme found in the anecdotes of all these artists is that profit tends to take a backseat for them, fulfilment and accessibility being their priority. Although most of their businesses have a certain profit margin, keeping prices student-friendly takes precedence.

A general challenge while running a handmade product business is mass production. Most of these artists work alone, and a lot of time, love, and care goes into each piece. Depending on the nature of the craft, sourcing materials for products also often poses a challenge.

In spite of the obstacles and arduous work, the owners and artists of these small businesses diligently maintain that the contentment they get from witnessing people enjoy their creations makes it all worthwhile. So whether you're someone who's hoping to start their own endeavour someday or simply an admirer of the arts, consider supporting small businesses.

Zabin is an engineering student at the Islamic University of Technology, a chronically online night owl, and a sufferer of many migraines. Find her at: zabintn@gmail.com

EDUCATION

FROM O/A LEVELS TO UNDERGRAD

Does early exposure to Computer Science matter?

BIPRA PRASUN DAS

Computer Science has become one of the fastest-growing academic disciplines in recent years, with promising prospects in fields like software development, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence. More students are choosing to study Computer Science in their O and A levels in an effort to obtain a competitive edge for their future academic endeavours, especially if they wish to pursue an undergraduate degree in Computer Science (CS) or Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), as both parents and students recognise the field's growing importance. This raises an important question: is O/A level Computer Science a springboard to undergraduate success, or can students without this foundation excel just as well?

"It definitely gives you a head start. Knowing the basics helped me grasp more complex concepts much more easily," says Ahnaf Islam, a Computer Engineering major at the University of South Florida, who studied both O and A level Computer Science. "However, that initial advantage only takes you so far. Eventually, it stops making a difference as you dive into more advanced topics that require a deeper level of understanding and application. If you are consistent with your studies, you shouldn't really worry at all. Universities assume you know next to nothing about Computer Science when you begin your studies, and you won't really miss out on any of the basics."

The initial stages of an undergraduate CS/CSE degree might be intimidating for students with no prior experience. Even if universities create their curricula to accommodate students from different backgrounds, some students could still find it difficult to understand computational thinking or coding. Alternative learning options, such as coding boot camps, online courses, and self-study materials like Harvard's CS50 or websites like LeetCode and Udemy, can help close the gap.

Sheikh Arifin Ahmed, a Computer Science student at BRAC University, reflects on his own experience: "I really wish I had some exposure to Computer Science before starting university. Grasping coding concepts was tough for me at first, as I was completely new to the subject, having never studied it during my O/A levels. However, after working hard for a few weeks, I could overcome a lot of my struggles with CS."

However, while subjects like Mathematics, Pure Sciences, and Economics have well-established teaching resources, O/A level Computer Science is still a relatively niche choice in many schools, with limited access to qualified teachers.

"I think studying A level Computer Science would have been more fruitful if my peers and I had the necessary resources, support, and qualified teachers. We mostly had to self-study and teach ourselves and each other," says Partha Pritom Ghosh, a second-year student at the University of British Columbia majoring in Computer Science with a minor in Data Science.

However, he still sees value in taking the subject. "A level Computer Science didn't directly help much in my undergraduate studies because the teaching approach was quite different, and we started from the basics again. However, it did give me a sense of what to expect. Even minimal help can make a difference, so if you're planning to study Computer Science further, O/A level CS is a valuable start, especially if you put in the effort to practise."

A common misconception is that early exposure to CS is only about learning to code. However, the field of Computer Science as a whole includes much more than just programming; it also includes algorithmic thinking, problem-solving, and even abstract mathematical ideas like discrete mathematics and graph theory. Some students may struggle in university, not because they lack coding experience, but because they are unprepared for the theoretical depth required in subjects like data structures, automata theory, and computational complexity.

Muhammad Masrur Ahmed, now pursuing a degree in Computer Science and Engineering at North South University, shares: "The foundational concepts I picked up in O level Computer Science turned out to be more useful than the advanced topics we studied in A level. University courses tend to revisit and build upon the basics in much greater depth, so having a solid grasp of those fundamentals really makes a difference. The A level syllabus, though more advanced, often presents topics in a way that doesn't align with how CS is taught at university."

In the end, choosing to do Computer Science for O/A levels should be motivated more by personal interest than by a sense of necessity for success in college. While gaining early exposure to the field can help build a foundation and ease the transition to undergraduate coursework, it is not essential for excelling in university. Many top CS professionals and researchers started their journeys later in life, often using self-learning as a tool to catch up. Most university programmes are designed to teach from the ground up, meaning prior knowledge isn't mandatory. However, approaching the subject with genuine enthusiasm can make the process much more fulfilling.

So, if you feel excited by the prospect of understanding how algorithms work, exploring the inner workings of a computer, or coding your first programme, then you can go ahead and take that leap. But if your passion lies elsewhere, trust that there are many paths to success and fulfilment, and the best one is the one you truly enjoy walking.

Bipra Prasun Das studies Computer Science and Engineering at North South University.

ILLUSTRATION: **ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM**

"The foundational concepts I picked up in O level Computer Science turned out to be more useful than the advanced topics we studied in A level. University courses tend to revisit and build upon the basics in much greater depth, so having a solid grasp of those fundamentals really makes a difference. The A level syllabus, though more advanced, often presents topics in a way that doesn't align with how CS is taught at university."

CAREER

Your guide to landing a job at an international development organisation

ALLIN MOHANA BISWAS

Have you ever dreamt of working with an international organisation? The idea of contributing to the sector of global development can be both thrilling and daunting. When I first considered pursuing a career in this field, I had no clear idea where to begin. However, as I explored further, I realised that although international organisations have their own unique structures, the process of applying for a role in one of them is not too different from any other job.

For starters, looking for a role in such organisations is fairly easy. This is because the information required to apply tends to be accessible. Platforms such as LinkedIn, UN Careers, and UN Volunteers offer direct access to job listings from international organisations, making it easier than ever to find opportunities in international development organisations. All the job seekers have to do is seek out a role that match their skills and apply accordingly.

Lamia Mohsin, a reporting and knowledge management associate at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh, offered valuable insights into navigating the international development career landscape. According to Lamia, "Soft skills are critical for navigating the complexities of international development. Some of the most important ones include adaptability, the ability to work in diverse contexts, critical thinking, and, above all, empathy."

These skills are essential because international development requires professionals who can adjust to different environments while engaging with various cultures and dealing with global challenges.

For those considering a career in international development, it's important to understand that the route can vary based on individual interests. Lamia explained that the sector offers a wide range of roles, from policy and advocacy to research, communications, and programme implementation.

"Progression typically involves gaining field experience, networking, and taking on leadership roles. Many professionals transition from local non-governmental organisations to regional or international roles before moving on to senior positions within international organisations such as the UN," she explained.

While there is no single route to success, gaining experience and expanding your network is essential for advancing in this field.

One factor that can play a role in securing a position at an international development organisation is referrals. Lamia acknowledged that referrals can be advantageous. However, she stressed that referral alone will not secure a role. "Even internal candidates have to qualify in an extremely competitive merit-based selection process involving several stages of written and viva assessments. Referrals can help, but they do not guarantee a job," she added.

The process of applying to international organisations, particularly the UN, can seem challenging to many. As Lamia puts it, "The initial stage of CV screening is extremely rigorous as candidates must have relevant academic and work experience to be able to progress to the next stage."

Hence, for aspiring candidates, it's essential to ensure your qualifications align with the specific requirements of the role, or you may risk not being shortlisted. Now, there's a notion that international organisations often offer high salaries and that the work is glamorous. However, this may not be entirely true.

"People simply assume the work is glamorous and high-paying, or that a master's degree guarantees a job. In reality, the job is stressful and may often require individuals to stay away from their families, especially in the case of international assignments or missions. Experience, networking, and specialised skills matter as much as, if not more than, academic credentials," said Lamia.

For those just starting out in their careers, Lamia offered advice on the types of qualifications needed to enter the field. She said, "A bachelor's degree is usually required for entry-level roles, but a master's is often preferred for mid- and senior-level positions. For research or advisory roles, PhDs in relevant disciplines are often preferred."

Lamia further added that an undergraduate degree, combined with relevant work experience, particularly through internships or fellowships, can also open doors to entry-level opportunities. "Volunteering with NGOs, participating in UN programmes like UN Volunteers, or engaging in grassroots initiatives are excellent ways to develop both soft and hard skills. Roles that involve research, writing, and public speaking are especially beneficial for those hoping to work in this field," she remarked.

The most rewarding part of working in international development is knowing your work has a tangible impact. "Even small, micro-level improvements in the fight against climate change can be incredibly rewarding.

The opportunity to engage in high-level discussions and contribute to interventions that improve communities is deeply fulfilling. Working with people from all over the world has also made me more appreciative of cultural diversity and inclusion," said Lamia.

With that being said, priorities at international development organisations can shift over time. Those looking to build a career in this field need to adjust to the needs of the organisation they are working for accordingly. Lamia notes, "In the past decade, there has been a growing demand for green jobs, especially in areas like climate change and energy transition. However, the volatility of sector-specific jobs is also evident, influenced by factors like funding constraints and geopolitical instability."

For those considering a career in an international organisation, Lamia's advice is straightforward but invaluable: "Gain field experience, build as many networks as possible, follow global policy trends and issues, and have an open-minded approach towards exploring different career pathways."

The world of international development is a dynamic and evolving field, offering countless opportunities to make a difference. While there is no rigid path to success in this field, developing adaptability, continuously learning, and remaining passionate about creating positive change will guide you through your career journey.

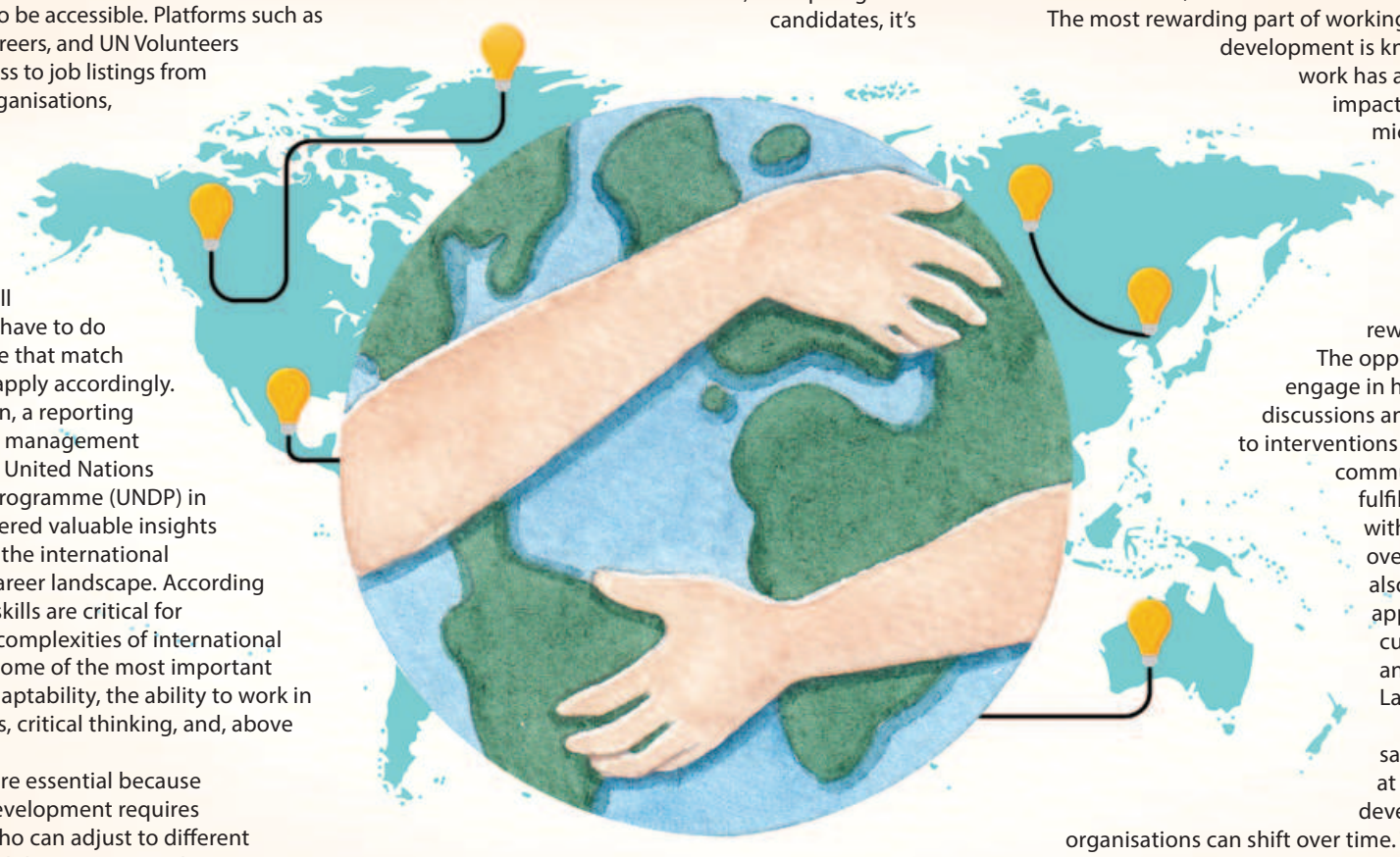


ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

IN FRAME

THE WORLD STOPS FOR GAZA

In solidarity with Gaza, youth across Dhaka join global strike

PHOTOS: **AMRAN HOSSAIN, ORCHID CHAKMA, PRABIR DAS**