

Don't leave women migrant workers to suffer in silence

Better skills and protection mechanisms are key

It is concerning that the migration of women workers abroad has been gradually declining over the last four years. What is truly worrying is the reason behind it: unsafe working conditions and abuse in destination countries. Despite countless media reports and studies by organisations working with migrant workers, many of these women continue to endure physical abuse and have nowhere to turn for help. Some are trafficked and forced into prostitution, and many return to their homeland in body bags, with the causes of their deaths not properly investigated. Most of them go to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan, and Lebanon.

It is little wonder that the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) has found a significant decline in the number of women going abroad for work. A recent study by the Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Programme found that 94 percent of returning women experienced regular physical and mental abuse, 47 percent reported sexual harassment, while 97 percent were denied medical care. Meanwhile, 80 percent were not given adequate food, and 82 percent had to work from early morning until midnight. According to the Wage Earners' Welfare Board, the bodies of 412 female migrant workers were returned since 2021, with 84 of them having died by suicide.

There are cases in which women have been thrown from rooftops after enduring prolonged torture and given no medical treatment. Death certificates, however, rarely reflect the abuse and mental trauma that may have led to these deaths. This horrifying reality has been widely publicised for many years, yet the previous government did little to ensure the safety of migrant workers or to investigate the deaths of so many women. Women are often offered only low-paying jobs, such as domestic work, because they lack skills, including language skills. As housemaids, they are at the mercy of their employers and often confined to the house 24 hours a day, which increases the risk of abuse.

We, therefore, urge the authorities to immediately ensure that women workers do not go abroad without the necessary safeguards. Like Indonesia and other countries, providing them with skills training for caregiving and nursing will allow them to access jobs that are safer, more dignified, and better paid. Better residential training, including orientation sessions on workers' rights and the culture of the destination country, should be offered. Bangladesh's high commissions in these countries must be more proactive in protecting women migrant workers who find themselves in danger, and helplines should be made available to all workers and their families. Bangladeshis involved in forcing women migrant workers into sex work must also be brought to book.

Equally importantly, there must be diplomatic dialogue with host countries to ensure that allegations of abuse by their own citizens are taken seriously and that necessary action is taken. We must stop treating our citizens as cheap labour to be exported, disregarding the inhuman conditions under which many end up working.

Don't help bury inconvenient truths

JU must address allegations about the performance of its probe bodies

A probe committee usually represents a mechanism for discovering the truth, but in most cases across our public system, it means paperwork that often serves no purpose or never even sees the light of day. When a scandal or accident or crisis occurs, we see that a committee is formed, time passes, memories fade, and the probe report, if it appears at all, is rarely acted upon. Unfortunately, the example set by Jahangirnagar University (JU), one of our leading public educational institutions, failed to mark a departure from this tired pattern.

In the wake of the student-led mass uprising that toppled the Awami League government last year, the university administration was in a feverish mood to address a backlog of grievances ranging from plagiarism and sexual harassment to unnatural deaths and murder on the campus. The authorities have since established at least 39 committees to investigate these incidents. On the surface, this might look like a rigorous house-cleaning. If we look deeper, it proves to be nothing but a rote ritual.

Despite spending nearly Tk 40 lakh on "sitting allowances"—a fee paid to committee members simply for turning up—less than half of these bodies have submitted their reports. And there's been a disturbing asymmetry: when the accused are students, the wheels of justice apparently turn with surprising speed. Inquiries into the students were completed, and punishments were meted out. But when the probe involved teachers, the process allegedly slowed. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in the law department. For months, students have demanded the resignation of two associate professors, accusing the pair of a campaign of "physical and mental torture." Separately, another probe body was formed against a teacher after a student alleged that he had published her academic article under his own name without permission. One year later, the matter remains unresolved. Students allege the administration frequently forms probe bodies only to delay or bury investigations without taking meaningful action.

The vice-chancellor, however, argues that the administration is overwhelmed by complaints spanning 54 years. This is a convenient shield. The delays speak less of administrative burden than of a lack of intent. In Bangladesh, the idea of probe committee has long been a favoured tool not to reveal the truth, but to buy time until the public loses interest. The students who led the uprising demanded a departure from the impunity of the past. Instead, they are witnessing its replication in different forms. We urge the JU authorities to expedite all pending probe-related works and provide justice or solutions without delay regardless of the identity of the accused involved.

Why a supply chain mindset is key to fixing our education



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What comes to your mind when you hear "supply chain management"? Perhaps transport, logistics, inventory, production, distribution, procurement, and all sorts of related jargon. But what if we took a step back and looked at it as something more? What if it is not just a business buzzword but a mindset that helps us recognise how everything is connected and manage processes to create real value in the bigger picture? As an educationist, here are my two cents on the supply chain mindset in education, and how its failures lead to socioeconomic losses.

In a factory, from acquiring raw materials to shipping finished products, every step affects the end result. One small glitch at the start, or even halfway through the process, can trigger a chain reaction of problems down the line. Now imagine applying that same logic to something seemingly different, like education.

Instead of seeing education as just a mix of classrooms, textbooks, and exams, what if we started viewing it as a supply chain? The "raw materials" are curious young minds, the "processes" are the methods, tools, and environments necessary for teaching and learning, and the "finished product" is a capable, well-rounded graduate. This perspective can help us identify weak points, improve flow, and raise the overall quality of education, just as a good supply chain improves efficiency.

Our education system, much like a production line, moves through several linked stages. We take in children, our valuable raw materials, and through years of learning, we aim to produce skilled, knowledgeable, and confident graduates who can thrive in the workforce.

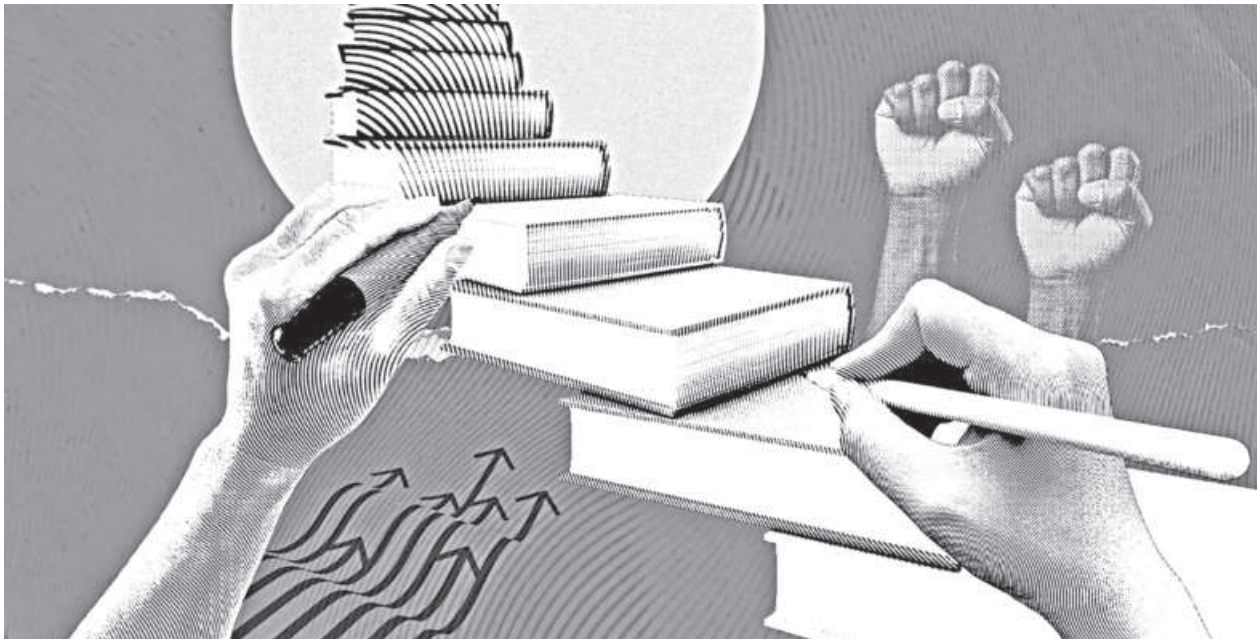
The foundation for all development is set at the primary school stage. It is where children learn basic literacy, numeracy, and how to interact with the world. If a student struggles here, that weakness does not simply vanish. It becomes harder and costlier to fix as they move up the chain.

Next comes secondary school—our specialised assembly line. Here, students begin focusing on specific subjects and developing independent interests. However, this is also where cracks in the system become more visible. Many teachers lack proper training, resources are outdated, and the pressure to memorise facts for the SSC and HSC exams overshadows real learning. Think of this faulty process as a weak supplier that keeps lowering the quality of production in a factory. The result is students who may score well but lack the critical thinking or practical skills necessary to apply their knowledge effectively.

Finally, we reach the tertiary level,

which should act as the final stage. A university is where students refine their knowledge and prepare for real-world challenges. Yet this stage often exposes more failures, as students who may progress without learning to think critically and truly understand core concepts begin to fall behind. Dropouts rise. Due to weak ties with industries, many graduates remain unprepared even for the jobs available.

The World Bank's Development Report 2024 gives us a clear picture of this disconnect. Between 2016 and 2022, Bangladesh's manufacturing industry grew by 9.1 percent annually, yet employment in the same sector



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

declined by 9.6 percent. This illustrates a widening gap between education and employability, like a factory producing goods that no one wants to buy. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2023), more than 20 million students are enrolled across all levels of education—roughly 27 percent of the total workforce—but many never reach their full potential.

While World Bank suggests that Bangladesh's unemployment rate for 2024 is 4.7 percent, some researchers estimate the real rate at 10 percent. According to the BBS, the number of unemployed people in the country rose from 2.46 million in 2023 to 2.62 million by December 2024, an increase of 160,000 within a year. The situation is worse for university graduates. Just think, 29 percent of unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 29 are university graduates. A 2025 estimate by bdjobs.com reveals that out of around 700,000 graduates entering the job market each year, fewer than 100,000 can secure formal employment. Many end up in low-paying informal jobs

system, many underprepared graduates fall through the cracks. This happens because our teaching, learning, and assessment systems do not align at different stages of education. When lessons focus on memorisation rather than understanding and critical thinking, you naturally end up with graduates who can pass exams but not solve critical problems. To fix this, we must move from rote learning to competency-based education. Students should be measured not just on what they know, but on what they can actually do.

Then comes the role of teachers, the people running the production line. Teachers are expected to do so much but are given so little support. We must understand that investing in them, particularly through continuous professional development in modern pedagogy, communication, emotional intelligence, and real-world skills, is an investment in the nation's future.

Another challenge is students' growing dependence on AI tools. While useful for research, many use them to

term innovation slows. Many talented individuals also leave the country, while social frustration rises. Ultimately, the entire nation bears the cost.

An education system that fails to prepare students adequately is like a broken supply chain, wasting resources, increasing reliance on foreign expertise, weakening the economy, and threatening future growth. And the solution is not just to open more schools or enrol more students. It is to view education as a holistic journey, a supply chain that transforms a curious child into a well-rounded professional. We must align all stages of it into a cohesive system to ensure proper teaching, curriculum, assessment, and industry preparedness.

If we can do that, Bangladesh won't just be producing graduates; it will be producing high-value professionals who are skilled, adaptable, and ready to meet global demands. That's how education stops being just a pathway to a degree and starts becoming a force that creates real value for every individual as well as for society at large.

Israel stands exposed even if global powers fail to act



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Israel's problem is that despite its military power and its economic and technological superiority in the Middle East, it has limited capacity to portray its destructiveness as successful victories.

This limitation lies not only in Israel's small size and population, but more in the fact that it owes a large extent of its political, military and economic strength to the United States. Without unlimited US support, it could neither have executed what it has done so far, nor continued a genocidal war for more than two years without bearing heavy economic losses and civilian casualties. Even with US backing, Israel cannot evade international pressure and condemnation.

Overall, this war has revealed the depth of Israel's dependence on the United States—so much so that fears

are rising within Israel about the possible erosion of its independence and the transfer of decisions relating to war and peace to the White House. The UN General Assembly resolution calling for an end to Israel's 1967 occupation, and its withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank, further demonstrates Israel's isolation from the rest of the world and its reliance on the US.

Furthermore, the rise of other Arab and regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, in parallel with the atrophy of Israel's position in US strategy in the Middle East—as evidenced by Washington's increased reliance on them on issues concerning Gaza and Syria—signals a weakening of Israel's independent standing. This is also reflected in the indifference towards the narrative

of "normalisation," especially after the decline of Iran's influence in the region.

The trajectory of the genocidal war creates a pathway to a future in which Israel can be seen and treated like any other state, without exceptional global indemnity for acts such as genocide.

Israel has exposed its reality as a colonial, settler, racist and theocratic state—one that practices genocide against other people. It has lost precisely where it once sought recognition for itself.

Israel has forfeited its claim to monopolise the status of the "victim" after pursuing a brutal policy of genocide, and it has forfeited its image as a democratic state by enacting openly discriminatory policies towards Palestinians. It has lost the sympathy it sought to cultivate in the West. It can no longer be viewed as a "single weak state targeted by ferocious neighbours" that, in "self-defence," can justify threatening or killing them. It can no longer play the victim card.

As a result, Israel is losing its legitimacy on the international stage, echoing the mechanisms and dynamics that led to the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Israel has also become a political,

security, military, financial and moral burden on Jewish communities in the West, while losing its status as a safe haven for Jews. It has become the only place in the world that poses a danger to Jewish lives because of the policies of Israel's rulers.

Globally—from governments to societies—Israel is increasingly viewed as a state acting against international values, standards and resolutions, and as a security, political and financial burden. It has become a destabilising force and a threat to the values of freedom and equality by manipulating and conflating anti-Israel sentiment with anti-Semitism. That strategy, too, has stopped working. Today, it is clear to the world that Israel's attempt to dodge criticism by invoking religion or the history of the Holocaust has long been a tactic to evade accountability for the inhuman killing of another population over generations.

The war has exposed Israel's weakness and the impossibility of eliminating the Palestinian people or removing their cause from international and Arab agendas. Israel's attempt to annihilate Palestinians without restraint has led to the current international backlash against it.