

Ballots, bills, and the life we are building

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For most young people, the upcoming election is not about hope. Hope is abstract, cheap, and endlessly recyclable. What this generation would vote for, some eagerly, some reluctantly, some for the first time, is accountability. Not the cinematic kind, not the post-election press conference version, but the everyday, measurable kind that shows up in pay slips, rent receipts, offer letters, and resignation emails. The kind that answers a very basic question: will life after this election be materially different for those trying to build it from scratch?

With the election days away, young people are not speculating about who will win as much as they are preparing a checklist of what must follow. For a generation that has timed its education, careers, relocations, and risks around uncertainty, this election represents a pivot, because it creates an opening for long-delayed reforms. The expectation is simple and uncompromising, as governance must now translate into opportunity.

For years, the idea of a good future has been narrowly defined. Respectability has been synonymous with security, and security has been almost exclusively associated with government employment. Entire career paths have been socially downgraded in the process. Private sector jobs, entrepreneurship, creative work, research, and skilled technical roles have all been treated as secondary options and acceptable detours until something more stable comes along. This has distorted not only aspirations but policy priorities.

A post-election government is expected to correct this imbalance by actively nurturing a diversified job market where dignity is not monopolised by the public sector. That means policies that incentivise private firms to hire and train fresh graduates. It means labour protections that recognise entry-level vulnerability. It also means publicly acknowledging that a healthy economy cannot funnel millions of ambitious young people into a few thousand exam-based positions without wasting human potential at scale.

Closely tied to this is the expectation that entrepreneurship will finally be treated as a serious economic lever

rather than a selectively celebrated headline. Over the past decade, founders have learned to read between the lines: funding often follows familiarity, visibility often depends on proximity, and support systems tend to reward presentation over product. The next phase must look different. Young people are watching for policies that support founders, not politically connected pitch decks. Transparent grant criteria, independent evaluation mechanisms, and publicly disclosed funding decisions are no longer optional. Beyond funding, reform is expected in the form of simplified compliance, tax relief during early years,



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

and a regulatory environment that understands experimentation and failure as features of innovation, not flaws. The state's role here is not to pick winners, but to ensure that the race itself is fair.

Education remains the fault line where expectation is sharpest. Degrees have multiplied, but confidence in their value has not. Students graduate fluent in theory yet unprepared for practice, armed with grades but lacking marketable skills. Employers complain, institutions defend themselves, and graduates are left navigating the gap alone. The expectation after this election is not cosmetic curriculum updates, but structural alignment. Degrees must translate into employability. That

requires sustained collaboration between universities and industry, mandatory and meaningful internships, and outcome-based accountability for institutions. If graduates consistently fail to transition into work, that failure must be measured and addressed. Education policy can no longer operate in isolation from labour market realities.

For women, the expectations are both urgent and overdue. The question is no longer whether women will participate in the workforce, but whether the system will finally be designed with that participation as a given. Women already work, both formally and informally, paid

struggle to keep pace with rent, time disappears into traffic, and quality of life erodes quietly. The post-election expectation is not luxury development, but liveability. Affordable rental housing for early-career workers, efficient public transport that respects time as a productive resource, and decentralised urban planning that allows opportunity to exist beyond a handful of overburdened zones. Cities must be redesigned as ecosystems where ambition is supported, not punished. Underlying all of this is a broader shift in how young people relate to the state. This is a generation that is informed, comparative, and acutely aware of global benchmarks. They are not waiting to be inspired; they are watching to be convinced. Accountability, in this context, is not rhetorical, but measurable. It shows up in employment data, business survival rates, graduate outcomes, women's workforce retention, and cost-of-living indices. It demands timelines instead of slogans, benchmarks instead of visions, and course correction instead of denial.

The election has created a rare alignment between political transition and generational readiness. Young people are not asking for perfection. They are asking for direction that is coherent, fair, and economically grounded. They understand that reform is incremental, but they also understand when momentum is absent. What they expect now is evidence that opportunity is being built deliberately, across sectors, across cities, and across careers. This moment will not be judged by speeches delivered this week, but by policies implemented in the months that follow. Whether a graduate can find meaningful work without surrendering dignity. Whether a founder can build without navigating informal gatekeepers. Whether a woman can plan a career without calculating exits. Whether a city allows its youth to live, not just endure. These are the outcomes that will define this electoral cycle for young people.

As the country prepares to vote, the expectation is clear. The next government inherits not just power, but scrutiny. Young people are no longer waiting to be told to hope. They are prepared to measure. And this time, they are paying attention to what happens after the ballots are counted.

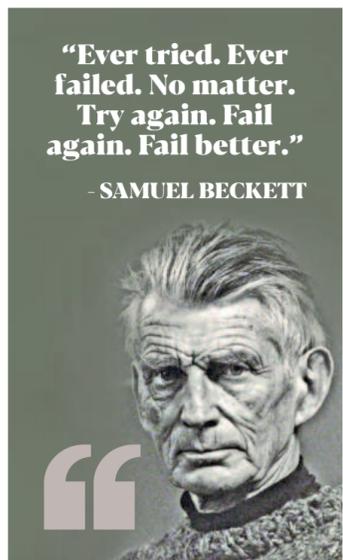
Google plans to add AI-powered "auto browse" to Chrome

NEXT STEP DESK

Google is preparing to introduce an artificial intelligence (AI) feature in its Chrome browser called 'auto browse' that can carry out multi-step online tasks on behalf of users, according to a recent blog post by the company.

The update represents a further evolution of Gemini in Chrome as the assistant was first introduced as a tool for answering questions and summarising content on individual webpages. Google has since expanded its functions to include comparing products across multiple tabs and recalling previously visited pages, while signalling its intention to automate more routine online activities.

With auto browse enabled, Gemini will be able to analyse images displayed in the browser, identify items within them, and search for similar products online. It can then add selected items to a shopping basket and apply discount codes while adhering to a user's stated budget. For tasks that require authentication, Gemini can also use Chrome's password manager to sign into accounts, as per Google.



"Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

-SAMUEL BECKETT

Work-work balance

The delicate art of juggling multiple jobs

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

We often hear about the struggle for work-life balance, where you are trying to find the best equilibrium between your professional responsibilities and real-life obligations. But for a growing number of people, the challenge is more complex: work-work balance. This is the precarious act of managing time, energy, and income across two separate jobs, while still trying to salvage scraps of time for everything and everyone else.

The concept isn't widely discussed, in part because many employers formally prohibit secondary employment. Yet economic reality both here and worldwide tells a different story. Faced with rising costs, stagnant wages, and without a financial cushion, more individuals are turning to multiple income streams out of sheer necessity. What begins as a financial stopgap can quickly become a complex, exhausting juggling act. The question shifts from "How do I leave work at the office?" to "Which office, or gig, or shift, demands my attention right now?"

This layered existence introduces unique pressures. Conflicting schedules, competing priorities, and the constant mental load of switching contexts can make the endeavour feel unsustainable. But take a step back, catch your breath, and you will realise that breaking this down into a few manageable steps can help you tackle this seemingly unachievable act.

Step 1: Define your 'why' and prioritise accordingly

Before you can balance anything, you must know what you're balancing for. Is this purely a financial bridge, or is one job a stepping stone toward a new career? Start your 'balance' by creating a candid list for each role, weighing factors like immediate pay, schedule flexibility, skill development, and long-term relevance to your goals.

If covering rent is the urgent driver, the higher-paying job may take precedence. But if professional growth is a key aim, you might allocate more mental energy to the role that offers valuable experience, even if its current pay is lower. Your 'why' then becomes your compass, helping you decide where to invest your best hours and where to set firmer limits.

Step 2: Manage your two main logistics: time and money

With two jobs, efficiency is non-negotiable. Your calendar is your command centre. Block out all committed hours for Job A, Job B, and, critically, dedicated personal time. Treat these personal blocks as unbreakable appointments. Use digital tools and



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

colour-coding to visualise your week at a glance, and share relevant availability with employers to preempt conflicts.

Financial management is equally tactical. Track your income from each source against essential expenses. Begin by calculating your true hourly yield after accounting for costs like commuting or work-specific attire. Identify and eliminate 'leakage', i.e. those small, unnecessary spends that undermine your hard work. The goal is to ensure your extra labour translates into meaningful financial progress and not just survival.

Step 3: Take care of your health and well-being

This is the most easily neglected yet most critical step. Your health is the foundation upon which this dual structure is built. Working two jobs is a marathon and requires deliberate recovery, and as such, schedule breaks proactively. A full day off from all work each week is ideal, but even micro-breaks such as a quiet coffee or a short walk can serve as vital system resets.

Chronic fatigue, irritability, and declining performance are signals of your waning long-term health. Use your allotted time off from both jobs to truly disconnect. The occasional long weekend or vacation is not a luxury; it's maintenance. Neglect this, and you risk a breakdown that could cost you both incomes.

Step 4: Build guardrails and find synergy

Juggling two roles requires a dual mindset: one focused on integration, the other on separation. First, seek synergy. Audit your tasks and skills across both jobs. Can a skill from one be applied to improve efficiency in the other? Even small efficiencies, such as listening to a relevant audiobook during a commute for Job A, or using a lunch break from

Job B to handle life-admin tasks, add to your saved time and mental space.

However, integration must be counterbalanced by strict, non-negotiable boundaries. Your time is your most finite resource, and you must guard it with professionalism and clarity. This means mastering the art of the polite but firm decline. Phrases like "I can't commit to that deadline given my current workload," or "My availability ends at 6 PM," should be your much-needed declarations of structure. Use calendar tools proactively to block out time for your second job and, just as importantly, for rest. Communicate these limitations early and consistently to manage expectations.

Step 5: Conduct regular reality checks

Your work-work arrangement should be dynamic. Every few months, conduct a formal review: Is this job still serving its purpose? Has your financial situation improved? Is the cost to your health or relationships too high? Be prepared to pivot. Perhaps you can renegotiate hours, drop the more draining job, or leverage newly gained skills to consolidate into a single, better role.

Finding the equilibrium

At the end of the day, achieving work-work balance is less about perfect symmetry and more about creating a stable, purposeful structure. It requires honesty about your limits, discipline with your time, and constant vigilance over your well-being. The aim is to use this demanding phase to build security and opportunity and not to further perpetuate a cycle of exhaustion. By strategising thoughtfully, you can navigate this challenge, meet your obligations, and protect the person at the centre of it all - you. Remember, even the most skilled juggler knows that catching one ball at a time is what keeps them all in the air.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT



UNICEF

Management Information System Assistant

Deadline: February 19

Eligibility:

- Secondary degree in data science, or engineering, including IT, statistics, development studies or related subjects.

Minimum experience: 5 years

CARE Bangladesh

Technical Facilitator

Deadline: February 14

Eligibility:

- Graduate degree in a relevant discipline. A diploma or Bachelor's degree in Agriculture, Fisheries, or Livestock will be given preference.

Minimum experience: 2 years



The Asia Foundation

Deputy Team Leader

Deadline: February 23

Eligibility:

- Bachelor's degree in political science, public administration, public policy, law, international development, or related field.

Minimum experience: 7 years

International Justice Mission (IJM)

Coordinator Training & Development

Deadline: N/A

Eligibility:

- Prior work experience in organising training events or similar program events and coordinating with government stakeholders and vendors.

Minimum experience: 2-4 years

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



Stanford students raise \$2 mil for student founder accelerator



NEXT STEP DESK

Two Stanford University students have raised \$2 million to fund and expand an accelerator program designed for entrepreneurs still in university or recently graduated.

The program, called Breakthrough Ventures, was founded by recent graduate Roman Scott and master's candidate Itbaan Nafi, according to a report by TechCrunch on the matter. They began by hosting demo days at Stanford in 2024 and have now secured funding from venture capital firms, including Mayfield and Collide Capital. The accelerator aims to fill a funding and network gap for student entrepreneurs. The program offers participants grant funding of up to \$10,000, access to legal support, mentorship, and compute credits from partners like Microsoft.

At the end of the program, founders have the opportunity to receive a follow-on investment of \$50,000. The program will use a hybrid model with in-person meetups and will culminate in a demo day at Stanford. The founder duo hopes to deploy their \$2 million fund over three years to incubate at least 100 companies, adds the report.