Why entrepreneurship must be Bangladesh's next national mission

ANWARUL ALAM CHANDAN

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi graduates step out of universities expecting to begin their professional lives. Too often, they meet a labour market that cannot absorb them: recruitment is slower, competition is fiercer, and the gap between academic achievement and work-ready skills remains stubborn.

This is no longer a temporary mismatch. Traditional employment is under pressure everywhere, squeezed by automation, artificial intelligence, slower growth and the aftershocks of the pandemic. Young people are hit first and hardest, pushed into unemployment, underemployment, or insecure work. Bangladesh is not immune, and the stakes are higher because the country is young.

A demographic window that will not stay open

More than 30% of Bangladesh's population, about 52 million people, are aged 15 to 29. That youth bulge can be an engine of growth, but only if it translates into productive work.

The latest Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey (2023) puts overall unemployment at 4.48%, while youth unemployment is 7.3%, nearly 1.94 million young people. Around 8.26 million young people (18.9%) are NEET (not in education, employment, or training). Unemployment is also high among educated youth: 12.3% of university graduates and 8.87% of higher secondary graduates are unable to find jobs.

These numbers point to a blunt reality: education, as it is currently delivered and connected to the economy, is not a guarantee of employment.

Why the old jobs promise is failing

Bangladesh's private sector has been the main route to formal jobs, but hiring slows when investment slows and investment slows when the outlook is uncertain. Policy constraints, political instability, weak diversification, and limited exploration of new opportunities all feed into cautious recruitment.

Even where jobs exist, many are concentrated in a narrow set of sectors. That leaves graduates queuing for a small pool of roles, including public sector posts, while the economy needs more firms, more products, and more new markets.

If Bangladesh continues to treat employment primarily as a question of job placement, it will keep arriving late to the real challenge: job creation.

Entrepreneurship as job creation, not a buzzword

Entrepreneurship is often romanticised as individual ambition. In practice, it is a national capability: the ability to build enterprises that solve problems, serve customers, and create work, first for the founder, then for others.

That begins with discipline rather than slogans. A viable enterprise is built to earn profit sustainably and ethically, through clear goals, a defined market, and a product or service that meets real demand. It requires an understanding of customers, quality, pricing, competition, and delivery, and, above all, the ability to adapt.

Done well, entrepreneurship delivers three national benefits at once. It creates employment because small and growing firms hire locally and absorb skills that the formal sector cannot. It fosters innovation because new businesses test ideas faster than large institutions, strengthening resilience in the wider economy. It can also widen inclusion by opening routes for women, rural youth, and people outside elite networks, provided support systems are designed fairly.

This is why entrepreneurship should be treated as a public mission, not a side project.

What young founders in Bangladesh are up against

Many young entrepreneurs in Bangladesh run into the same bottlenecks early. Access to finance is limited, collateral demands are high, and the pipeline for seed investment remains thin. Business literacy is uneven, from planning and bookkeeping to compliance and marketing. Mentorship and networks are patchy, leaving too few structured pathways to learn from experienced founders and industry practitioners. Meanwhile, policy friction persists through unclear processes for licences, registration, taxes, and regulatory approvals, particularly for first-time entrepreneurs.

These barriers are not proof that young people lack talent. They are proof that the ecosystem is underbuilt.

Building the support system that entrepreneurship needs

If Bangladesh is serious about turning its demographic dividend into economic strength, support for entrepreneurship has to be practical, scalable, and coordinated. That means moving beyond one-off competitions and short training towards a pipeline that takes people from interest to launch to growth.

The first requirement is skills that match reality. Entrepreneurship is not the same as office work. In a job, roles are defined and risks are shared. In a business, the founder plans, decides, manages, and carries responsibility for both profit and loss. Training should reflect this, covering customer discovery, basic accounting, inventory and pricing, negotiation, and digital marketing, delivered through universities, local hubs, and credible online platforms.

IMAGE: MARILIA CASTELLI/ UNSPLASH

Mentoring should be routine, not exceptional. It works best when it is structured, with regular sessions, clear goals, and access to sector-specific advice. Partnerships between universities, chambers of commerce, and established entrepreneurs can convert informal support into a reliable system.

Access to finance also needs reform, and so do the terms. Loans can help businesses grow, but they can also sink first-time founders who borrow before they understand risk and cashflow. Finance should come with coaching and realistic repayment schedules, and where possible, alternatives such as seed grants, credit guarantees, revenue-based finance, or equity for high-growth startups.

Compliance should be simpler and more predictable. Trade licences, registration, documentation, and communication with relevant authorities are essential for legitimate business, but processes should be navigable. Clear guidance, digital one-stop services, and transparent timelines reduce the hidden cost that complexity places on young founders.

Finally, entrepreneurs need routes to market. The quickest path to sustainability is sales. Market linkages with suppliers, buyers, and value-chain actors improve input quality and pricing power. Public procurement can also be used more strategically by setting aside a portion of contracts for SMEs that meet standards.

The fundamentals still matter: customers, cash, and consistency

Even in an era of social media marketing and platform-based commerce, the basics determine whether a small business survives.

Customer satisfaction remains the foundation. That means understanding what customers need, delivering consistent quality, setting prices that reflect both costs and willingness to pay, and building trust over time. Poor stock management, weak service, and sloppy presentation quietly drive customers away, and many small ventures fail for these reasons long before they fail because of broader economic shocks.

Financial management is equally decisive. Entrepreneurs need to separate household and business expenses, keep accurate records, track costs, and make careful decisions about spending and reinvestment. A clear business plan is not paperwork for its own sake. It is how founders explain their idea to lenders, partners, and investors, and how they test whether the numbers work.

A national mission, not an individual gamble

Bangladesh does not lack young people with ideas. What it lacks is a national system that makes it realistic for those ideas to become sustainable enterprises.

Treating entrepreneurship as a national mission would mean aligning education, finance, regulation, and market access around one goal: enabling young people to create productive work for themselves and for others. It would mean valuing small businesses not only as informal activity, but as the seedbed of the next generation of firms.

The choice is not between jobs and entrepreneurship. Bangladesh needs both. But without a serious push for enterprise-building, the country risks squandering a demographic advantage that will not last.

Anwarul Alam Chandan is a development worker based in Dhaka. Reach him at atmanwar@hotmail.com.

Anthropic raises $30 billion, now valued at $380 billion

NEXT STEP DESK

Anthropic, the artificial intelligence company behind the Claude chatbot, has raised $30 billion in a recent Series G funding round that now values the firm at $380 billion, more than doubling its valuation from last year.

The round was led by Singapore's GIC and Coatue, with co-leads including D. E. Shaw Ventures, Dragoneer, Founders Fund, ICONIQ, and MGX. Other participants included Blackstone, Fidelity, Sequoia Capital, and the Qatar Investment Authority, alongside portions of previously announced investments from Microsoft and Nvidia.

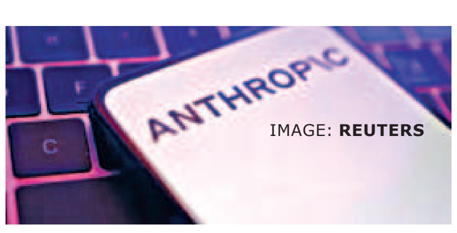


IMAGE: REUTERS

The company stated the funding will support frontier research, product development, and infrastructure expansion. Anthropic said its annual run-rate revenue has reached $14 billion, with Claude Code alone generating over $2.5 billion. Business subscriptions to the coding tool have quadrupled since the start of 2026.

India approves $1.1 bln fund for deep-tech startups

NEXT STEP DESK

India's cabinet has approved a 100 billion rupee, or roughly $1.1 billion, state-backed venture capital programme aimed at supporting startups in high-risk sectors including AI and advanced manufacturing, according to a recent report by TechCrunch.

The initiative, first outlined in the January 2025 budget speech by the finance minister, received formal clearance this week, more than a year after it was proposed. The programme will operate as a "fund of funds", committing public capital to private investment firms that in turn back startups.

According to the report, the scheme is intended to take a more targeted approach than a similar programme launched in 2016. That earlier effort also committed 100 billion rupees and channelled funds into 145 private investment vehicles, which together invested more than 255 billion rupees in over 1,370 startups, according to government data released on February 14.

IMAGE: MAGNUS ENGO/ UNSPLASH

The announcement comes ahead of the India AI Impact Summit, a government-backed event expected to draw global technology companies including OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, Meta, Microsoft, and Nvidia, alongside major Indian conglomerates such as Reliance Industries and Tata Group.

At the same time, funding conditions have tightened. Indian startups raised $10.5 billion in 2025, down just over 17% from the previous year, while the number of funding rounds fell nearly 39% to 1,518 transactions, according to data from Tracxn.

X runs on a core team of 30, product head reveals

NEXT STEP DESK

X's product team operates with just 30 core members, according to Nikita Bier, the company's head of product, in a recent post on X that has drawn attention to the platform's lean staffing.

Bier made the revelation while explaining why X recently removed its dim mode feature. "We don't have the capacity to support more than two colours right now," he wrote, adding that the team is looking into lightening the black on the web. In a follow-up reply, Bier compared X's team size to industry rivals: "Meta: 87,000, Microsoft: 221,000, Google: 190,000 ... X: 30." He also posted open roles for engineers in Palo Alto, stating that "there is no communication overhead here."

After users on X questioned how a global platform could function with such a small team, Elon Musk joined the conversation to clarify. He stated that approximately 30 engineers from xAI, his artificial intelligence company, work on X's AI-based recommendation system, supporting the core product team.

IMAGE: KELLY SIKKEMA/ UNSPLASH

Spotify's top developers haven't written code since December, exec says

NEXT STEP DESK

Spotify's top developers have not written a single line of code since December, relying instead on AI to handle coding tasks, a company executive revealed during a recent earnings call.

According to a TechCrunch report, Spotify co-CEO Gustav Söderström told analysts that engineers at the company are using an internal system called 'Honk', powered by Claude Code, to accelerate development. The system allows for remote, real-time code deployment using generative AI.

In the earnings call, Söderström described an engineer on their morning commute using Slack on their phone to ask Claude to fix a bug or add a feature to the iOS app. Once completed, a new version of the app is pushed to the engineer for approval, all before they reach the office.

Regarding AI-generated music, Spotify stated that it allows artists and labels to indicate in metadata how a song was created, while continuing to police the platform for spam.

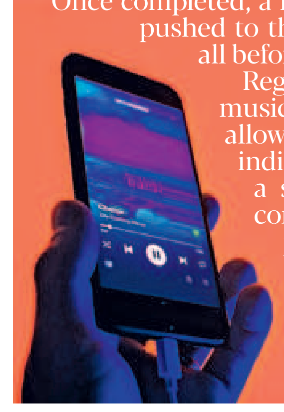


IMAGE: COTTONBRO STUDIO/ PEXELS

Anthropic, AWS, Microsoft among 15 firms forming Trusted Tech Alliance

NEXT STEP DESK

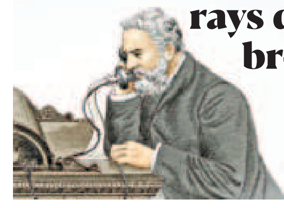
15 technology companies from Asia, Africa, Europe and North America have launched a new coalition called the Trusted Tech Alliance (TTA), aimed at promoting what they describe as a more secure and transparent global technology ecosystem.

The founding members include Anthropic, Amazon Web Services (AWS), Cassava Technologies, Cohere, Ericsson, Google Cloud, Hanwha, Jio Platforms, Microsoft, Nokia, Nscale, NTT, Rapidus, Saab, and SAP.

The group was formally announced on February 13, 2026, at the Munich Security Conference. It brings together companies spanning the technology stack, including connectivity providers, cloud infrastructure operators, semiconductor manufacturers, software developers, and artificial intelligence (AI) firms.

In a joint statement, the companies said they had agreed on a shared set of principles intended to define what constitutes a "trusted" technology provider, regardless of nationality. These commitments include pledges on corporate governance and ethical conduct, operational transparency, secure development practices, supply chain oversight, respect for the rule of law, and data protection.

The group said it plans to expand membership and to help shape shared international approaches to what it described as an interoperable and open technology stack. It added that its aim is to support national and cross border efforts to enhance technological sovereignty, resilience, and competitiveness in an increasingly fragmented global landscape.



Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun's rays do not burn until brought to a focus.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL