As AI transforms software jobs, Vivasoft CEO urges graduates to master critical thinking

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As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly reshapes the global technology industry, software companies are rethinking how they hire while countries race to establish themselves as centres of AI innovation. For Bangladesh, the challenge extends beyond adopting AI tools. It also involves strengthening higher education, improving access to computing infrastructure, attracting investment, and creating an ecosystem capable of producing AI products rather than relying primarily on outsourcing.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Shafiul Hasan Tareq, chief executive and co-founder of the software company Vivasoft, said Bangladesh's ability to compete in the AI era will depend less on following the latest technological trend and more on building stronger foundations.

BEYOND PROMPT ENGINEERING

While frontier AI model development demands exceptional expertise and computing resources, Tareq believes most graduates entering Bangladesh's software industry should focus on learning how to use AI effectively rather than trying to build foundation models. "There are multiple segments. For core model development, you must be highly competent. If you want to work at places like OpenAI or train your own models, you need a very sharp IQ and dedication," he shared.

Bangladesh, however, faces structural limitations. "We lack the infrastructure and GPU capacity required for this," added Tareq. Instead, he recommends mastering coding agents and prompt engineering while learning to critically assess AI-generated responses. For regular developers entering the industry, he recommends mastering coding agents and prompt engineering. He believes it is crucial to understand how to talk to AI, and specifically to recognise when AI is hallucinating or providing incorrect information. "The main problem we see is people simply copy-pasting AI answers as absolute truths. Instead, you should challenge the AI using your own research and knowledge to get more accurate, filtered results."

UNIVERSITIES ARE FALLING BEHIND

Tareq believes Bangladesh's higher education system is struggling to keep pace with the speed of AI development. Although he works with universities, he said public institutions often require years to revise curricula because of regulatory approval processes, leaving courses outdated before students complete them. "Our current AI syllabuses are lagging 15 to 20 years behind global standards."

As such, rather than constantly chasing new AI trends, universities should prioritise stronger programming fundamentals, analytical thinking, and emotional intelligence, he argued. "We should not just chase AI trends. We must focus on strong fundamentals in coding and thinking. Students also need critical thinking and high emotional intelligence (EQ)." He added, "One can use AI to build an agent or software, but those will eventually be considered 'low-end' skills at the bottom of the pyramid."

AI WILL RESHAPE SOFTWARE JOBS

As AI becomes integrated into software development, Tareq expects the labour market to evolve rather than disappear. "In Bangladesh, the education system is often job-market driven rather than passion-driven," he stated, arguing that graduates who entered computer science purely because of attractive salaries would find it increasingly difficult to compete.

"The market will split: there will be AI operators, and then there will be those who use AI to generate high-value, fruitful solutions. The latter will command much higher salaries," Tareq stated. "I won't hire someone who lets the AI provide the entire solution. AI should be the execution tool, not the brain."

FROM OUTSOURCING TO INNOVATION

According to Tareq, Bangladesh's ambitions to become an AI innovation hub will require solving structural challenges that extend far beyond workforce training. Without access to advanced hardware, local engineers struggle to gain practical experience with technologies such as distributed GPU computing, reducing the country's competitiveness in advanced AI development.



Investment remains another major obstacle. Tareq believes local angel investors often demand disproportionately large ownership stakes while Bangladesh also lacks experienced mentors capable of helping founders build globally competitive businesses. "We need to bring back Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) who have served on international boards to groom our startups. Our startup ecosystem is currently facing a critical crisis; even Pakistan is receiving more investment and has much larger IT companies."

He also called for greater participation from established business families through professionally managed investment funds and urged faster government decision-making. "While the government has some great initiatives, when it comes to AI, an idea can become obsolete in six months; by the time government funding is processed, the window for technological relevance often closes."

He added that companies should also recruit researchers who combine advanced academic qualifications with commercial experience. "Recruiting someone with a PhD in computer vision who has worked in the industry for three years acts like a 'steroid' for a project's growth."

Unlike many industry leaders concerned about brain drain, Tareq views the migration of talented engineers as a long-term advantage, arguing that many eventually return with valuable experience and international business connections. Instead, he believes the software industry lacks the commercial ecosystem that helped Bangladesh's garment sector expand globally. "We need a system like buying houses or consultancy firms that bring in work and outsource the development to local vendors."

PREPARING FOR AN AI ECONOMY

Looking ahead, Tareq expects AI adoption to spread well beyond software companies into banking, accounting, customer service and other sectors that rely heavily on repetitive work.

For Tareq, Bangladesh's long-term competitiveness will depend on how successfully it develops both technical expertise and human judgement as AI becomes increasingly embedded across industries. "Finally, I believe the demand for IQ and EQ will only increase. Bangladesh must prepare, because as robotics and AI advance, even our garment industry might face a massive threat within a few years."

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

1. Acted Bangladesh - Information Management Officer
Deadline: August 5
Eligibility:
- Bachelor's degree in Data Science, Geography, Environmental Science, Urban and Regional Planning, Geographic Information Systems, Computer Science, or any related field.

Minimum experience: 2-3 years (for Masters), 4-5 years (for Bachelors)

2. BRAC Bank PLC - Associate Manager, Money Market & Fixed Income Operations, Treasury & FI Operations
Deadline: August 8
Eligibility:
- Bachelor's or Master's degree from a reputable institution, with prior experience in a relevant field.

Minimum experience: 5 years

3. ActionAid Bangladesh - Master Trainer, Tailoring and Handicraft
Deadline: August 9
Eligibility:
- Prior experience providing technical and vocational skill development training for community-based women and youth.

Minimum experience: 1-2 years

4. Square Pharmaceuticals PLC - Executive, Quality Assurance/Production
Deadline: August 12
Eligibility:
- M. Pharm / B. Pharm from reputed universities.

Minimum experience: 1-2 years/ freshers

VC-backed SV startups more likely to commit fraud, research finds



IMAGE: PEXELS

NEXT STEP DESK

Venture capital-backed startups in Silicon Valley are more likely to face fraud charges than companies that did not take institutional investment, and the outsized growth expectations imposed by investors are a significant contributing factor, according to two new academic papers published in June.

Research from Imperial College London and France's Emlyon Business School built a database of tech founders and companies who faced civil and criminal securities fraud prosecutions from the Securities and Exchange Commission, the US federal regulatory agency responsible for enforcing laws governing the buying and selling of securities, and the Department of Justice, the federal government body responsible for enforcing US law, between 2000 and 2023. A companion paper from the University of Toronto examined 654 fraud cases against US VC-backed startups across the same period, finding that startups launched during overheated markets with weak oversight and investor due diligence are 19% more likely to later commit fraud.

The Emlyon paper describes a three-stage pattern it calls "façading". It begins with surface façading, in which founders exaggerate how well the company is performing. This can progress to reinforced façading, where fake evidence is created to back the lies, and then to deep façading, in which entire parallel realities are constructed, complete with fake demos and fabricated technical capabilities.

The University of Toronto paper found that startups controlled by founder-dominated boards were twice as likely to commit fraud as those with investor-controlled or shared boards. It also found little evidence that fraud allegations prevent founders from raising funding for subsequent startups, even when those allegations received significant media coverage. "New investors and the broader VC market do not penalise past misconduct," the paper concluded.

Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great.



- John D. Rockefeller

LinkedIn adds 'seems like AI slop' reporting button

NEXT STEP DESK

LinkedIn has introduced a new reporting option allowing users to flag low-quality AI-generated content in their feed, and has simultaneously removed its own AI post-writing tool, replacing it with a proofreading feature that corrects without replacing the user's voice. The company's chief product officer Hari Srinivasan said in a post on the platform that "AI slop is a top priority for all of us" and that people come to LinkedIn to connect with real people and share genuine perspectives.

LinkedIn says it is also investing in automation defences that now block hundreds of thousands of automated comment attempts daily, along with millions of other automated interactions in recent months. New classifiers will identify AI-generated or low-quality content and reduce its visibility in recommended posts from outside a user's network. LinkedIn will also begin privately flagging users' dashboards when their posts are perceived as inauthentic due to heavy AI use, aiming to help posters improve rather than simply penalise them.



IMAGE: UNSPLASH

Zuckerberg predicts billions will have personal AI agents within five years as Meta's losses mount



IMAGE: REUTERS

NEXT STEP DESK

Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg has told investors that he expects billions of people to have personal AI agents working on their behalf around the clock within five years, as he attempts to justify the company's escalating AI spending amid signs of investor unease. "I think it's extremely unlikely if you look out five years from now that you don't have billions of people with a personal agent that understands your goals and that is just working on your behalf 24/7 to achieve your goals in whatever the domain is that you care about," Zuckerberg said during Meta's second-quarter earnings call.

He said he could see people using such agents to help with finances, health, interpersonal relationships, and household management, adding that WhatsApp, already the leading platform where users interact with Meta AI, would become increasingly central to the company's agent strategy. Meta's stock fell nearly 10% following the earnings release. Reality Labs, the division responsible for AR glasses and VR headsets, lost approximately $4.6 billion in the quarter, part of a running total of around $88 billion in losses since 2021. Free cash flow dropped 91% year-on-year to $784 million, driven by AI infrastructure investment.

Pangram raises $9 million to scale AI content detection as bot traffic overtakes human web traffic

NEXT STEP DESK

AI detection startup Pangram has raised $9 million to expand its tools for identifying AI-generated text and images, arriving at a moment when internet infrastructure firm Cloudflare reports that bot traffic has overtaken human traffic on the web for the first time. The round was led by Menlo Ventures, with participation from Haystack, ScOp, Script Capital, and Cadenza. Alongside the fundraising, Pangram launched Pangram 4, a new text detection model it says is over 99% accurate at identifying AI-assisted writing and mixed human-AI content, and released Pangram Image, an AI image detector, in research preview.



IMAGE: PANGRAM

Bradley Emi and Max Spero.

Pangram was founded by Stanford AI and machine learning graduates Max Spero and Bradley Emi approximately two years ago. The system works by training a large machine learning model on tens of millions of known human documents, then creating a "synthetic mirror" of each, replicating the topic, length, and tone but written by a frontier AI model. The detector learns the stylistic differences between the two without relying on metadata or hidden watermarks.

The startup distinguishes between fully AI-generated content and AI-assisted writing, where a human wrote the text but used AI to refine it. Users access Pangram via a $20-per-month web subscription or a Chrome extension that labels posts in real time across X, LinkedIn, Substack, Reddit, and Medium. Notable API customers include Substack, which has integrated Pangram to show readers which newsletters are AI-written, as well as Quora, schools, publishers, and recruiters.