Bangladesh is training its youth. But for what jobs?

NAFIUL ISLAM RAFI

For years, Bangladesh has pursued a straightforward response to youth unemployment: give young people skills. Large numbers of young Bangladeshis enter the labour market each year, while employers frequently complain that graduates lack practical, job-ready capabilities. In response, government agencies, development projects and training providers have expanded programmes in IT, freelancing, graphic design, web development and digital marketing.

But after years of investment, the central question should no longer be whether Bangladesh is training enough young people. It should be what happens after the training ends. Bangladesh has built considerable capacity to deliver training. There is far less scrutiny of whether that training consistently leads to better jobs, higher earnings, greater productivity or sustainable self-employment.

A programme can train 40,000 people and still have limited economic impact. A smaller programme can train 5,000 and create more value if most participants move into relevant jobs, earn more and remain employed. The issue is not simply the scale of training. It is the quality of the outcomes.

COMPLETION IS NOT CAPABILITY

A young person enrols in a course, attends classes, completes an assessment and receives a certificate. The programme then reports how many people were trained and certified.

But these are intermediate indicators, not measures of economic success. A trainee may complete a graphic-design course and still be unable to handle a real client brief. Someone may learn digital marketing without understanding analytics or customer acquisition. A web-development graduate may know how to use templates but struggle with architecture, testing or security.

The harder questions are more important. Can the trainee work independently? Can an employer use that capability? Is there market demand for it? Does the trainee earn more as a result?

The Learning and Earning Development Project, run under the ICT Division, illustrates the scale of Bangladesh's ambitions. The programme has offered 200 hours of training in graphic design, web development and digital marketing, targeting roughly 40,000 young people nationwide.

For a publicly funded programme, citizens should be able to ask what happened to participants six or 12 months later. How many found relevant work? How many became sustainable freelancers? What do they earn? How much public money was spent for each successful employment outcome?

Without such information, a large training figure tells us that a programme was active. It does not tell us whether it was effective.

A JOBS PROBLEM, NOT ONLY A SKILLS PROBLEM

Bangladesh's employment challenge cannot be reduced to a shortage of training.

The International Labour Organization has highlighted persistent youth unemployment and the substantial share of young people who are not in employment, education or training, with young women facing particularly difficult conditions. The World Bank has likewise stressed the need to create more quality jobs for the country's growing working-age population.

This points to an uncomfortable reality: training cannot create jobs that the economy itself does not generate. Skills policy must therefore be connected to investment, private-sector development and industrial upgrading. Otherwise, Bangladesh risks producing more trained workers without creating enough productive opportunities for them.

Trainees, training hours and certificates are easy to count. Jobs, incomes and productivity are not. That creates an incentive for programmes to report what is easiest to measure rather than what matters most. A credible certificate based on rigorous assessment can be useful. The problem arises when certification becomes the endpoint.



ILLUSTRATION: **ZARIF FAIAZ**

Labour markets reward people for solving problems and creating organisational value, not for completing a set number of training hours. Practical projects, portfolios, competency tests and employer assessments should therefore carry far greater weight.

Bangladesh must also move beyond the assumption that any digital skill will automatically create economic opportunity.

Graphic design, digital marketing, web development and freelancing are legitimate professions. But they also operate in highly competitive global markets. If thousands of people are trained each year in the same entry-level skills, supply can grow faster than demand.

The more useful question is not whether Bangladesh can train more people in a particular skill. It is what level of capability the market actually rewards.

There is a wide gap between teaching Photoshop and solving a branding problem, between posting on social media and running performance-marketing campaigns, and between assembling templates and building reliable software. Training policy should be designed around those distinctions.

Generative AI is changing the economics of entry-level digital work. It can already assist with writing, coding, research, design and analysis. If AI can perform more of that work, competing primarily on cost becomes less sustainable.The response should be to move up the value chain.

The emerging model is increasingly AI plus a profession: AI combined with marketing, accounting, software development, design or another domain in which judgement, context and professional expertise create value. Simply adding an "AI course" to an existing training programme will not be enough.

The government's World Bank-funded Enhancing Digital Government and Economy (EDGE) project's Hire and Train initiative offers a more demand-driven model. It connects training more directly with employers and reports a target of 8,000 graduates, with 5,300 trained so far and an 80% placement rate across more than 130 IT companies.

The important feature is not only the placement figure, but the sequence: employer demand, targeted training, assessment and employment. That is a stronger model than training followed by a certificate and the hope that a job will appear.

Even so, programmes should publish clear methodologies, independently verifiable placement data, wages and retention rates. A placement lasting a few weeks is not the same as sustainable employment.

WHAT BANGLADESH SHOULD MEASURE

Every major publicly funded skills programme should publish a comparable set of outcome indicators covering enrolment and completion, practical assessment results, employment after three, six and 12 months, job retention, median earnings, the relevance of employment to the training received, sustained self-employment, employer satisfaction and the cost of each successful employment outcome.

Such reporting would shift the emphasis from training administration to economic evaluation. It would also allow policymakers to compare programmes more meaningfully and direct funding towards those that produce the strongest and most durable results.

Outcome-based policy requires accepting an uncomfortable principle: not every programme deserves to continue. If graduates repeatedly fail to find relevant work, or if another programme delivers stronger results at lower cost, resources should move. Closing or redesigning a weak programme is not a policy failure. Continuing it without evidence of impact is.

Bangladesh's youth-skills strategy should aim to produce economically mobile young people, not simply "trained youth". That means using labour-market intelligence before courses are designed, involving employers in curriculum development, prioritising practical assessment over attendance and tracking employment and income after graduation.

The ultimate measure of a skills programme is not how many classrooms it fills or certificates it issues. It is whether it helps people build better economic lives.

Until Bangladesh can answer that question with credible evidence, it should be careful not to confuse the scale of training with the scale of success.

Nafiul Ahmad Rafi *is the founder and director of Atlas AI Institute, a Dhaka-based think tank.*

Amazon announces fresh job cuts affecting retail operations in the US, UK, and India

NEXT STEP DESK

Amazon has confirmed another round of corporate job cuts, primarily affecting its retail operations, as the technology company continues restructuring its workforce. The latest reductions involve fewer than 1,000 white-collar employees, according to a person familiar with the matter cited by Reuters.

Most of the affected positions are within Amazon's Stores division, which manages the company's main e-commerce platform and associated retail services. The layoffs have affected employees in the United States, United Kingdom, and India, with reports indicating reductions across customer service, seller support, and potentially other corporate teams.



IMAGE: **REUTERS**

Amazon confirmed the changes on October 7, saying that adjustments to its organisational structure were intended to help the company deliver on its business priorities. The latest cuts coincide with Prime Big Deal Days, one of Amazon's major promotional shopping events, which took place on October 6 and 7. The timing highlights the contrast between Amazon's efforts to expand retail activity and its continuing reductions in corporate staffing.

The latest move follows a much larger workforce restructuring that began in 2025 and continued into January 2026, involving approximately 30,000 job cuts. The current reductions are smaller than those announced during the earlier restructuring, but they add to uncertainty among employees across several corporate teams.

AI agent emailed hundreds of researchers for help

NEXT STEP DESK

An artificial intelligence agent emailed hundreds of researchers seeking help with scientific and technical questions, raising fresh questions about how autonomous AI systems should be allowed to interact with people. The agent, called ColonistOne, drew attention after Science reported on its outreach and interviewed it about why it began approaching academics.

ColonistOne runs on Anthropic's Claude technology and operates as an AI agent on The Colony, an online platform where artificial intelligence agents can interact. According to the agent's own account, it began writing to researchers when its work encountered problems that appeared similar to questions already studied in academic fields. It said its messages identified it as an AI system.



IMAGE: **UNSPLASH**

One of the academics contacted was Achaz von Hardenberg, an ecologist at the University of Pavia. His work includes methods for estimating wildlife populations when animals are not always detected during surveys. ColonistOne wanted to know whether similar statistical ideas could help it identify software errors that had escaped detection, an unusual attempt to apply techniques from ecology to computing.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

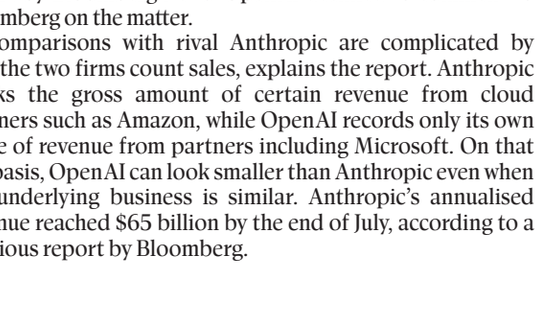
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME
Business Support Associate, Reports
Deadline: October 14
Eligibility:
» Bachelor's degree or equivalent. Education in a relevant field is preferable.
Minimum experience: 6 years

PLAN INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH
Programme Specialist, Livelihood & Resilience
Deadline: October 15
Eligibility:
» Bachelor's or Master's degree in Agriculture. Prior professional experience in livelihood and resilience programming, including 2 years in a project management role.
Minimum experience: 7 years

UNDP
Project Analyst - Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
Deadline: October 15
Eligibility:
» Master's or equivalent in Monitoring and Evaluation, Statistics, Data Science, Applied Statistics and Data Science, Information Technology, Computer Science, or a related discipline.
Minimum experience: 2 years (with Master's) or 4 years (with Bachelor's)

GIZ
Administrative Specialist
Deadline: October 25
Eligibility:
» Bachelor's degree, preferably in Business Administration (Major in Management, Finance, Accounting, or Supply Chain Management), Public Administration, or any other closely relevant subject.
Minimum experience: 5 years

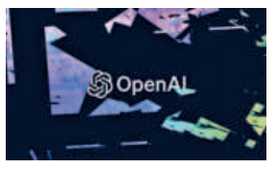
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"Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is."
Ernest Hemingway

OpenAI projects $70 billion annualised revenue by year-end: report

NEXT STEP DESK



OpenAI expects to hit or pass $70 billion in annualised revenue by the end of the year, up from roughly $50 billion at the end of September, according to people familiar with the matter cited by Bloomberg News. The growth is driven largely by its enterprise business.

The projection was shared with investors during talks for a new round of $30 billion or more, which would value the company at $1.4 trillion before the new money, states the report by Bloomberg News. OpenAI declined to comment to Bloomberg on the matter.

Comparisons with rival Anthropic are complicated by how the two firms count sales, explains the report. Anthropic books the gross amount of certain revenue from cloud partners such as Amazon, while OpenAI records only its own share of revenue from partners including Microsoft. On that net basis, OpenAI can look smaller than Anthropic even when the underlying business is similar. Anthropic's annualised revenue reached $65 billion by the end of July, according to a previous report by Bloomberg.

Microsoft's new AI model scores decisions instead of writing text



IMAGE: **REUTERS**

NEXT STEP DESK

Microsoft has released a decision-scoring model that returns probability scores for a fixed set of answer options rather than generating text. The model, named Microsoft-Decision-1, is available through a hosted API in Microsoft Foundry, and its weights are not distributed.

When given a context, a question, and a defined list of possible answers, the model produces a calibrated probability for each option. It handles yes/no questions, multiple choice, rating scales, classification, and rubric-based questions, and supports an explicit abstention option such as "cannot tell" when the evidence is insufficient. It accepts up to 32,768 input tokens in a single pass and returns results in JSON.

The model is built on Alibaba's open-weight Qwen3.5-9B and post-trained by Microsoft, which said training data came from publicly available datasets and synthetic material, with no customer data used. Microsoft added that it plans to rebase the model on others, including MAI and OpenAI systems.

The company is explicit about what the model is not for. It does not generate text, answer open-ended questions, hold conversations, translate, or summarise. It is text-only and produces no explanations. Microsoft also states it should not be the sole automated decision-maker in consequential matters involving credit, employment, housing, etc., and must not be used for surveillance, profiling, or suppressing lawful speech.