

Vocational skills are required for economic growth

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Engineer Neela founded Women in Digital in 2013 inspired by her heroic freedom fighter father Abul Khair Patwari. In this country, the inclination of women to work with technology is not visible. At that time, with the encouragement of her father, Neela took a timely step to do something about the women of the country. Half of the total population of the country is women. Neela thought that if those women are lagging behind, then there may be many obstacles in the way of realizing the dream of digital Bangladesh. So she started dreaming of economic empowerment of women through her founded Women in Digital. So far the institute has provided IT training to more than 10 thousand women and provided employment to more than seven thousand women. They have technical schools in five different villages in Bangladesh and in Nepal. In the schools they provide employment to women by training them in various technical subjects. The institute works on women in technology training and women in e-commerce, women in cyber security, health tech and agro tech. The company has already received many international awards. The company has always taken various steps respecting the tradition and history of its country. Just like that, they have brought an e-commerce marketplace for women called www.womenine-commerce.com or www.womeninecommerce.com.bd in view of women's day. Where women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh can buy and sell their products. Where women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh can buy and sell their products. They don't have to rely on any social media. This is the country's first market place for women entrepreneurs.

Every year on December 12, the day was celebrated as Digital Bangladesh, from this year it has been decided to celebrate it as 'Smart Bangladesh Day'. The current government has already defined the four pillars of Smart Bangladesh. These are Smart Citizen, Smart Economy, Smart Government and Smart Society. To create smart citizens we need to create well-educated and trained manpower. Government is supporting various initiatives to facilitate A2i Information Technology based citizen services. Bangladesh is already cooperating with A2i in building Smart City and Smart Village to implement Vision 2041. Bangladesh has advanced 20 steps in e-Participation and is now 75th in the world and Bangladesh has advanced 8 steps in the United Nations e-Government Development Index.

The current population of Bangladesh is 16 crore 98 lakh 28 thousand 911 people. Among them, 8 crore 40 lakh 77 thousand 203 men and 8 crore 56 lakh 53 thousand 120 women. 68.34 percent of the total population lives in villages and 31.66 percent in cities. The population growth rate is 1.22 percent. There are currently more than 12 million Bangladeshis working in more than 174 countries in the world. According to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), 12 lakh 4 thousand workers from Bangladesh went abroad till November 29 this year. Last year, this number was 11 lakh 35 thousand. Among them, 2 lakh and more skilled workers and 9 lakh and more unskilled workers. All in all, 2.5 million Bangladeshis have been newly added to the foreign labor market after Corona. A positive aspect of labor migration this year is that a record number of workers went to non-traditional destinations like Italy and the UK instead of traditional markets in the Middle East. In 2022-23, these expatriates sent around US\$21.61 billion in remittances through legal channels. More than one lakh women workers have been employed abroad in the financial year 2021-22. The amount of remittances from expatriate Bangladeshis is not coming. One of the reasons is lack of skilled manpower. Due to the development of technology, the whole world is now becoming dependent on technology. As before, the space for manual labor is shrinking day by day. As a result the unskilled manpower of our country is losing their jobs. Among manual workers in Asia and even South Asia, the wages of Bangladeshi workers are the lowest. The wages of Bangladeshi manual workers abroad are slightly more than two hundred dollars a month. Similarly, Indian wages are more than four hundred dollars, Chinese about five and fifty dollars and Filipinos about six hundred dollars. There is a shortage of skilled manpower in the industrial plants of our country. There is a 20 percent shortage of skilled manpower in the country's largest ready-made garment sector. And our neighboring countries are taking this opportunity. Thousands of their skilled manpower are working in our garment industry and they are paying high wages. But our workers are working abroad for very low wages. 62 percent of our expatriate workers are unskilled, 36 percent are semi-skilled and only 2 percent are skilled. Among them, about 25 percent have completed primary education, more or less 26 percent have completed lower secondary education, a little more than 23 percent have passed secondary education and more or less 12 percent have passed higher secondary education. It is hard to think that we are hiring foreign skilled workers and paying them high wages, while our workers are living a humane life working as cleaners in various Middle Eastern countries for nominal wages.

Training is most neglected in our country. However, this concept has changed a lot in the last decade. Studies have shown that a 5 percent increase in skilled labor force participation through training leads to roughly a 4 percent increase in productivity and a 1.5 percent increase in wages. The difference in productivity between trained skilled workers and unskilled workers is less than 8 percent. There is a high demand for skilled

manpower everywhere in the country and abroad. No organization is interested in giving jobs to unskilled or semi-skilled manpower. As trained women workers are working in our garment sector and there is a demand for them in this sector, there are employment opportunities abroad especially in Jordan, Mauritius, Kuwait, Croatia, Japan and Hong Kong.

40 Technical Training Centers in 40 Upazilas and an Institute of Marine Technology have been set up in Chittagong with the aim of creating skilled manpower. 6 Institutes of Marine Technology, 64 Technical Training Centers under the jurisdiction of Manpower Employment and Training Bureau are being trained in 55 trades suitable for employment in the country and abroad in a total of 70 training institutions.

Workers' wages depend on job skills and bargaining power. The ability to negotiate depends on education, training and language skills. The main reason for the low wages of our expatriate workers is their backwardness in training, education. Apart from this, not possessing the language of the respective country. The current government is taking steps to create manpower according to the country where our expatriate workers are working by researching the advantages, disadvantages, potential problems etc.

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