

## Why locals not getting jobs? Business leader Kasem regrets low skills

Rabiul Islam | Update: 16:56, Feb 12, 2019



Handicapped by lack of proper skills, Bangladeshi companies often suffer while trying to hire better skilled people by incurring higher costs due to scarcity of quality manpower.

This observation came from Abul Kasem Khan, a former president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a scion of the family that founded AK Khan Group.

Already an AK Khan Group director, he said the employers face a challenge while trying to hire skilled people for industry and service sectors despite entry of 2.5 million youth into job market every year.

This has created an unwanted situation -- many youths are unemployed when the industries are not getting right persons, according to Abul Kasem Khan.

“When I interview people for various management positions, I do see many gaps in skills. There is definitely a mismatch,” he told Prothom Alo in an exclusive interview.

**Full text of the interview are given below:**

**Prothom Alo: How do you view the country's job market at present?**

**Abul Kasem Khan:** There are serious gaps in the job market today. At every level there are shortages of skilled workers. We all know that this is a major challenge which our economy is facing. We need skilled manpower at every level. The gap is definitely widening. The government is also taking this problem seriously. We are facing difficulties in getting the right people at the right place. When I interview people for various management positions, I do see many gaps in skills. There is definitely a mismatch.

Moreover, the cost to company comes into consideration as well given that there are skilled people but are not cost effective for that position, meaning there is a shortage causing higher costs for the company.

**Prothom Alo: Whereas a huge number of youth remains unemployed, the industrialists say they are not getting skilled manpower. Why?**

**Abul Kasem Khan:** Just getting an education cannot and will not guarantee a job under the current circumstances. Right skills are required for a job. There are many expatriates working in Bangladesh right now at various levels. Why are expatriates getting jobs when our locals are not? We need to create skilled people for the economy through right education, quality training, need-based vocational education etc. We need to determine through assessment as to who will get what level of education or what type? Has anyone engaged in doing any need assessments? Market will determine demand and supply in the job sector as well. We need to train our young generation with the right skills, there is no other way.

**Prothom Alo: What are the opportunities available for jobseekers?**

**Abul Kasem Khan:** Given our economic progress there will be requirements at every level. Our GDP [gross domestic product] is growing, industry and service sectors will have to create jobs at a higher level.

There are opportunities in service sector right now given the recent trend, which is good but it is not the best scenario as we have a large population and we need to create jobs at a higher pace, and industry is capable of creating more jobs than the service sector given our economic conditions.

Today, the ratio of our private investment to GDP is 23 per cent, which is creating jobs, but not at the pace we would like to see, as around 2.5 million people are coming to the job market every year. Therefore, a vast employment needs to be created by the private sector.

FDI [foreign direct investment] is expected to rise and with the special economic zones (SEZs) coming on stream, there will be opportunities for skilled human resources from the factory level to managerial level. From experts in communication to computer programmers, from factory workers to drivers, all will be required.

At the same time, automation and technology will take away basic jobs; therefore, additional skills development will be required to cater to these changes that are taking shape in our economy. As I mentioned earlier, the recent trend is showing good growth in the service sector, so more skilled persons will be needed in different services and industries.

**Prothom Alo: Do you think there are shortcomings in our education system?**

**Abul Kasem Khan:** Yes, our education system needs to be based on our economic needs, especially what the private sector requires. Education system needs to go through changes given new technologies coming from robotics to artificial intelligence (AI) under 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR); we need to reevaluate the entire education system keeping in mind the new areas of

development. We also need skilled teachers. Teachers need to be trained up properly. There has to be a transformation in the education system.

**Prothom Alo: Do you have any suggestion to bring changes in our education system, in line with skills requirements of industries?**

**Abul Kasem Khan:** The education system needs to be based on the economic needs as we are moving towards a middle income country; we need to transform our youth to become "global citizens" to give the skills to work in any economy around the world - and that should be the target and the objective. And as mentioned, the 4IR will add a new dimension which we need to accommodate. We need to cross examine and compare with other countries as well to see where we stand today. We have to think differently to address the issue and make radical changes wherever required. If needed, we have to hire teachers from abroad for our students. Why can't we bring teachers to teach our children wherever needed, if we can bring consultants and experts from abroad? It is our duty to the young generation to give them the right skills and the best education. Therefore, we need to completely redesign and transform our education system into a modern world class education system - and, we need to do that, there is no other option. Our young generation needs to be global citizens in every way possible!

**Prothom Alo: What should be short, midium and long term policies to solve unemployment problem?**

**Abul Kasem Khan:** We need to examine where the jobs are being created in the short-term to mid-term. I believe three major steps have to be taken to create employment opportunities. They are: environment for investment, ease of investments and incentives for investment. Under these three broad areas, many improvements are needed; such as, we need to reduce cost of doing business, reduce taxes and to ease doing business. The private sector needs to be encouraged, supported and given incentives to invest, which will create jobs, which is now the biggest challenge for the country. In terms of mid- term to long-term policies, we need to revisit the entire demand and supply of skills. In this regard, we have to carry out assessment on a regular basis.

**Prothom Alo: What is your message to the youth section of the society, as to get ready for the upcoming challenges of employment for them?**

**Abul Kasem Khan:** The economic development of Bangladesh will create jobs and opportunities for us in many ways. Today, Bangladesh is standing strong and looking towards accelerated GDP growth which will create many opportunities for new businesses especially for the young generation, and therefore, everyone will not seek jobs but I feel will be creating jobs for others. We have a large young population, which is our strength but we will need to convert this into our economic value for the development of Bangladesh as today's young generation will move Bangladesh to a developed nation by the year 2041.

They must keep that in mind and work towards building their knowledge and understanding. I would also strongly advise the young generation to achieve various skills including in communications and technology. Youth should not only seek jobs but also try to create jobs with their innovative ideas and hardwork, which will also help create wealth and prosperity for themselves and for the nation.