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# The Political Economy of Digital Labour in Bangladesh and MEA: Comparative Perspectives on Platform Work and Precarity

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## Abstract

The political economy of digital labour provides a critical lens to explore the restructuring of work and capital in the Global South. Bangladesh, recognized globally for its large online freelancing workforce, and the Middle East and Africa (MEA), known both as a traditional destination for Bangladeshi migrant labour and as an emerging hub of digital economies, together represent two significant nodes of transformation. This paper offers a comparative perspective on platform work and precarity in Bangladesh and MEA, focusing on the interplay between global platform capitalism, labour migration, and state policy.

The analysis highlights how Bangladesh's digital labour force emerges from a context historically reliant on migrant remittances, while MEA economies are experiencing rapid digitalization alongside entrenched informal labour structures. The comparative framework examines three dimensions: (1) the role of global digital platforms in shaping labour market precarity, (2) state regulation and governance of platform work in Bangladesh and MEA, and (3) the cross-border linkages between labour migration, remittances, and digital employment.

Findings suggest that while digital labour platforms offer youth employment, women's participation, and opportunities for transnational integration, they also reproduce vulnerabilities of informality, low wages, and lack of social protection. For both Bangladesh and MEA, the challenge lies in balancing opportunities for economic participation with the risks of deepening precarity under platform capitalism. By adopting a comparative political economy approach, this study contributes to debates on how the Global South negotiates digital labour transformations in a world increasingly shaped by technology, inequality, and migration.

**Keywords:** Digital labour, political economy, Bangladesh, MEA, platform work, precarity, gig economy, migration, remittances, Global South.

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