

Impact of Harkin's Bill

Country's 50,000 garment sector child labourers sacked so far

Some 50,000 child labourers have been retrenched from the country's garment sector following the introduction of Harkin's Bill in US Congress. without taking rehabilitation measures for them, reports UNB.

This was disclosed at a workshop here yesterday where the speakers appealed to the authorities concerned for rehabilitation of the hapless children.

The much-talked Harkin's Bill, formally known as Child Labour Deterrence Act 1994, was introduced in early 1993 to prohibit import of commodities manufactured with child labour.

Bangladesh's burgeoning garments sector, which exports readymade garments worth nearly two billion US dollars annually — about half the volume going to the United States — has freed almost all

the factories from child labour since October 31 last year in a bid to retain the US market. About 60,000 children were employed in this sector.

The bill has been introduced for serving coterie interest neglecting the fundamental rights of children working for food and shelter," said Barrister Nazmul Huda, MP, while inaugurating the workshop on "Child and Female Labour in the Development of Bangladesh and Human Rights."

Barrister Huda, former minister for information, hoped that visiting US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton would see herself the condition of children and women here and assist actively for their wellbeing.

No controversy arises when children in developed countries work on holidays. But children in developing nations,

working merely for food, are put on dock and vehemently criticised. "It's very much unfortunate," said Huda.

Bangladesh Garments Sramik Federation organised the workshop at the Engineers' Institute auditorium, which was also addressed by its president Mohammad Khurshid Alam and Brother Jarlath D'Souza.

Khurshid said concept of human rights and welfare varies in the developed and developing countries. "To maintain subsistence level in our country where most people live below poverty level is the real human right," the trade union leader observed.

More than one crore underage labourers work in different sectors in Bangladesh for their subsistence, Khurshid informed the function.

Only about 7,000 out of the more than 50,000 child labour-

ers purged from garment factories are getting education provided jointly by the government, ILO, UNICEF and BGM-EA in Dhaka and Chittagong, he said, adding more facilities should be extended for the rest.

The federation president urged the government and international organisations to take long-term rehabilitation programme for the jobless children.

Like 'Food for Education' programme, the government has to provide Tk 700 monthly for a retrenched garment sector child labourer for education and livelihood, Khurshid said.

He also urged the governments of USA and Canada to increase their garments quota for Bangladesh to enhance the employment opportunities for millions of unemployed women.

Chamber team back home

A six-member chamber delegation returned home on Friday after attending a conference on business opportunities in New Delhi from March 26-29, reports UNB.

Mahbubur Rahman, former President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Vice-President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry led the delegation.

Other members of the delegation were DCCI President R Maksud Khan former MCCI President Latifur Rahman, former DCCI President A Rob Chowdhury, DCCI Director A S M Quasem and A K M Sham-suddoha, President of Bangladesh Indenting Agents Association.

Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao inaugurated the conference titled Dynamic Asia, organised by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in cooperation with the ICC-India.

Mahbubur Rahman made a deliberation on the "Role of the Chambers of Commerce in a Liberalised Economy in the Promotion of Global Trade" in a special session of International Bureau of Chamber of Commerce (IBCC) on March 29.

The delegation participated in all the sessions of the conference. In one plenary, Latifur Rahman delivered on the effects of the disproportional trade liberalisation among the trading partners, now being experienced by Bangladesh.

Attended by over 700 delegates from 63 countries, the conference focused on deregulation and privatisation, India's liberalisation, regional trade agreements, foreign investment and development and Asia's new market economics.

Indian Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Commerce Minister P Chidambaram addressed two plenary sessions of the conference.



Mahbubur Rahman, former president of FBCCI and leader of Bangladesh team to ICC business opportunities conference in New Delhi, was received by the President of India, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, at a reception accorded to all the heads of delegations at Rashtrapati Bhawan on March 27. Also seen in the picture are First Lady Sharma and ICC president Rahmi Koc.

Sugar output exceeds target

By Staff Correspondent

The total production of the 15 sugar mills under Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) has already exceeded the season's output target.

According to the BSFIC officials, until April 1 this year, the sugar mills have produced 2,20,500 tons of sugar as against the target of 2,18,000 tons for the 1994-95 season.

In the last season the total production was 2,21,547 tons. They said sugarcane crushing is still going on in the mills and another 30 thousand tons

of sugar is expected to be produced at the end of the current crushing season.

The crushing will continue up to the middle of the next month. The officials also expect that the corporation would be able to make profit of Taka 26 crore this year. The corporation suffered a loss of Tk 12 crore in the last fiscal year.

The official sources said the corporation was profitable up to the year 1984-85. The organisation plunged into losses during 1987-88 and 1988-89 fiscal years.

After taking some austerity measures, the corporation is going to make profit this year, a senior official told The Daily Star. Of these measures, the cost of production has been reduced to Tk 1,500 per ton.

During the past two years, the corporation has given voluntary or normal retirement to about three thousand employees.

To overcome the previous losses the organisation is also trying to make optimum utilisation of the available resources, the sources mentioned.

KLM, Nedlloyd plan to increase interest in Martinair

The two largest shareholders in Martinair Holland N V KLM and Nedlloyd, each plan to increase their interest in Martinair to 50 per cent this month, says a press release.

This transaction is possible since the two Dutch financial institutions ICO and Securitas wish to divest their respective interest of 8.09 per cent and 8.90 per cent in Martinair Holland N V.

The transaction will have no effect on the long-standing independent status of Martinair Holland N V in regard to the two major shareholders.

The cooperative relationship between KLM and Martinair is one of strategic nature.

Martinair is one of the partners with which KLM wishes to work in order to build a worldwide route network.

KLM already has a 33.82 per cent share in Martinair Holland N V.

Saudi petrochemical income highest in four years

ABU DHABI, Apr 2: Increased production and prices have boosted Saudi Arabia's petrochemical income to its highest level in four years, official figures show, says AFP.

Net profits by the Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) nearly doubled to 4.2 billion Saudi riyals (1.12 billion dollars) in 1994 from around 2.12 billion riyals (565 million dollars) in 1993, a SABIC report said.

SABIC's board approved a dividend of 20 per cent to the Saudi government and other shareholders, the biggest cash distribution since the Arab world's largest chemical firm was established in 1977.

"Cash dividend did not exceed 10 per cent of the capital in the previous year. This is the first time in SABIC's history that the management increases the dividend to shareholders," said Zuhair

Kaswani, a leading United Arab Emirate stockbroker.

A breakdown showed the 1994 net profit was the highest since 1989, when high prices boosted SABIC's earnings to around 47.6 per cent of the paid up capital of 10 billion riyals (2.66 million dollars).

"The rise in 1994 profits reflected growth in output and marketing and an improvement in prices of various petrochemical products," the report said.

Production of petrochemicals, fertilizers, chemicals and petroleum products surged by 18.8 per cent to 16.2 million tonnes in 1994, boosting total sales by 47.8 per cent to 14.7 billion riyals (3.92 billion dollars).

SABIC has been involved in major expansion projects and setting up new ventures to face growing domestic and external demand.

The Saudi government controls 70 per cent of the company while around 20 per cent is owned by Saudi citizens and the rest by other Gulf investors. The government said last year it would slash its shareholding by nearly half to raise money to compensate low oil prices.

Saudi Arabia produces nearly eight million barrels of crude per day, accounting for 12 per cent of the total world crude supplies.

Its petrochemical output exceeds half the total Arab production of around 14 million tonnes.

SABIC's report showed total assets grew by around 11.5 per cent to 41.44 billion riyals (11 billion dollars). Its share, one of few Saudi shares traded in the Gulf, surged to 294 riyals (78.4 dollars) on Thursday from between 230 and 265 riyals in 1994.

ILO assistance programmes

International Labour Organisation (ILO) will extend assistance in various income-generating and social education programmes like computing, driving and typing in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The visiting Director of ILO, Paul J Bally, extended the offer when he called on Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shaukat Ali at the minister's secretariat office Sunday.

In the meeting, they discussed various issues relating to ILO and manpower problems, including ILO technical assistance programmes in Bangladesh and their prospects in the years to come.

The ILO Director said the country's objectives should be designed on tripartite basis so that ILO could try for the technical assistance to meet these objectives phase by phase.

The Labour Minister particularly mentioned the technical assistance now being geared up in the fields of self-employment generation in the country.

Concerned senior officials of the Ministry of Labour and Manpower and ILO were present during the meeting.

Britishia Biscuits launched

By Staff Correspondent

Britishia Biscuits of India will now be available in Bangladesh.

Bengal Samagra Ltd yesterday launched the famous international brand in a ceremony at a local hotel yesterday.

Initially, Bengal Samagra will import and market seven of Britishia's best selling products — Marie, Little Hearts, Cream Crackers and Milk Bites. Distribution in Dhaka starts today (Monday) and the products will soon be available at A and B class outlets throughout the city, to be followed by the rest of the country.

The products were unveiled at the launching ceremony by M Morshed Khan, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister, who in his speech said that due to changes in local tastes, there was now a market niche in this country for good quality international products. The function was also addressed by Abul Khair, Managing Director of Bengal Samagra, and Vikranj Kaushik of Britishia Industries Ltd, India.

Britishia, a part of Group Danone of France, is the leading producer of confectionery in India with 27 factories throughout the country, plans to eventually start a manufacturing unit in Bangladesh.



A workshop on "Trade Unions and Privatization" was organised by the Center for Analysis & Choice yesterday in the city. Twenty six participants including Members of Parliament, opinion leaders, leading industrialists and eminent labour leaders took part in the discussions.

Chinese economist warns of stagflation threat

BEIJING, Apr 2: A Chinese economist warned yesterday of the threat of stagflation after a year of galloping inflation, but according to a central bank survey people felt the pinch of price rises was easing, reports Reuter.

In February, production, construction and inflation all showed signs of cooling and the economy responded to macro-economic controls intended to combat overheating. Wan Donghua, an economist at the State Statistics Bureau,

wrote in the overseas edition of The People's Daily newspaper.

"However, there have also appeared some indications worthy of attention, the most important of which is that the slowdown in production in production in markedly faster than that of inflation," Wan wrote.

He said these signs begged the question of weather economic growth would slow or go into reverse while inflation remained high — the classic

ingredients of stagflation.

"We think the possibility of stagflation is not great, but the contradictions and pressures we face are still striking," Wan said.

China has set a target of 8-9 per cent economic growth in 1995, compared with actual 11.8 per cent growth in 1994. It hopes to cool inflation to 15 per cent from an alarming rise in the retail price index of 21.7 per cent in 1994, a record since the 1949 Communist takeover.



Bengal Samagra Ltd formally launched Britishia Biscuits of India in Dhaka at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday. — Star photo

Drug admn can test quality of 50pc medicines only

By Staff Correspondent

The Drug Administration of the country can test the quality of only fifty per cent of medicines due to lack of laboratory facilities, according to the South Asian Pharmaceutical conference in Dhaka Saturday.

The Director of the Drug Administration, Prof Chowdhury Mahmood Hasan, addressing the conference said, his organisation was unable to ensure the quality of medicines due to lack of manpower, logistic support and other reasons.

The conference, jointly organised by the Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Society and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), brought together drug experts from the World Health Organisation (WHO), India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Prof Chowdhury said, there were only two government testing laboratories in the country which examine the quality of 5000 samples annually, "although about 1000 samples require to be tested."

"Ninety-five per cent of the total demand of medicines is produced locally. About two

dollars or Tk eighty is spent per person a year in this country. Prof Chowdhury told the conference chaired by the President of FIP, Dr D Steinbach.

Emphasising the need for strict quality control of medicines as suggested by the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), the Chief of Regulatory Support of WHO, Geneva, Agathe Wehrli said, "the companies which cannot comply with the GMP, should stop production of medicines."

She said the implementation of the GMP required an investment which could not be provided by small drug manufacturers. In other words, she said, such small companies should go.

The Controller of Drugs, India, Dr P Das, presented a paper on quality control of drugs.

The two-day conference, which concluded yesterday, was also addressed by Health Secretary Syed Ahmed, the Federal Inspector of Drugs, Pakistan, Ali Akbar Sial and General Secretary of Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Society Nasser Shahrear Zahedee.

New TV network launched on Russia's Channel 1


MOSCOW, Apr 2: The new Russian Television Company ORT began broadcasting Saturday, taking over from the former Soviet Radio and Television monopoly Ostankino, says AFP.

ORT, 51 per cent of which is held by the state and 49 by private shareholders including Russia's eight largest banks, began broadcasting on channel one with a variety show and a documentary.

At midday (0800 gm) it put out a news bulletin closely modeled on those of Ostankino.

The Television Information Agency (ITA) remains in charge of news on ORT as it was under Ostankino. The news presenters are also the same and their work will continue to consist mostly of reading agency dispatches.

The government is expected to have a strong influence over the new television company, which was created by presidential decree late last year to broadcast on the only channel which is received across the whole of the former Soviet Union.



Chittagong Port Authority
Chittagong, Bangladesh
Traffic Department

Tender Notice

Tender for Lease and Operation of Straddle Carriers

Tender No: DT/Ship/Straddle Carrier/94 Dated: 22.3.1995

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) intends to take 4 numbers straddle carriers on lease for Container Handling Operation within CPA port protected area initially for a period of two years and hereby invites sealed tenders from the Owners/Authorised firms/Agents/Leasing company for the same. The tender documents will be available on and from 01.4.1995 in the office of the Director (Traffic), Traffic Department CPA. The payment will be made in Bangladesh taka.

Interested tenderers may obtain further information and clarification on the tender document from the office of the Director (Traffic), Traffic Department, Chittagong Port Authority, Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Eligible tenderer wishing to obtain tender document may purchase a complete set of 3 (three) copies thereof on submission of a written application mentioning the name, address, telephone, Telex, Fax number etc. and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Tk. 500/=.

The relevant money receipt shall accompany the tender.

Tender must be accompanied by earnest money of Tk. 2,00,000/= (two hundred thousand) in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order in favour of CPA and must be dropped in the tender box placed in front of the chamber of the Director (Traffic), CPA, before 11.45 hours on 01.6.1995 or sent so as to reach him on or before 11.45 hours on 01.6.1995. The tenders will be opened on the same date at 12.00 hours in presence of the tenderers or their representatives who choose to attend.

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