

DCCI discussion on link between private sector and missions abroad

Image crisis still country's biggest challenge: FM

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said the biggest challenge facing Bangladesh is to improve its image abroad.

Explaining gravity of the situation the foreign minister said Bangladeshis are asked to stand in separate when they produce Bangladeshi passports to immigrations.

Morshed Khan said Bangladesh is not properly depicted in other countries. "The actual scenario in the country is hundred times better."

He was talking as the chief guest at a discussion on "Building closer links between the private sector and the Bangladesh missions abroad," organised by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

Among others, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury and leaders of different

chambers and associations participated in the discussion.

During the open discussion session, the participants observed Bangladeshi missions in different countries should take up concrete programmes to improve the country's image.

Referring to their disappointing experiences regarding activities of most of the Bangladesh missions abroad, the business leaders said efficient and skilled people should be appointed at the foreign missions.

Turning to RMG sector, businessman turned politician Morshed Khan said the country's apparel sector is not only the single largest exporter, it has also created employment opportunities for 1.8 million.

Referring to recent remarks of a senior minister, Morshed Khan said there are blackholes of the country's economy. "But you cannot blame

the whole sector if a few are involved in mal-practices," he said. The culprits should be treated separately, there is no justification of punishing the whole sector, he observed.

Morshed Khan also said lack of co-ordination between different ministries has been affecting activities of the foreign ministry.

"The foreign ministry has been dealing with issues like trade, foreign aid, defence and overseas employment. There are four other ministries also deal with the issues. But lack of co-ordination and communication gap is really creating problems," the foreign minister.

Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said officials working in different missions abroad need more training. He observed most of those training inputs have to come from the private sector.

He also observed there should

be direct communication between the country's chambers and different foreign missions abroad.

Referring to the poor pay structure of the people working in foreign missions, the foreign secretary said the issues need to be addressed. "I think people cannot work efficiently if they are low-paid," he said.

International Chamber of Commerce, (ICC) Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman said the government should close down its missions in the countries where Bangladesh do not have any economic interest.

He also said there seems to be a parallel administration in the Bangladesh missions in different countries. "There is an absence of co-ordination in the diplomatic wing and commercial wing in the embassies," he said.

Agreeing with the ICC, B president's observation, the foreign

minister said, "It's happening because everybody is not under one command." He, however, informed the ministries concerned are now making attempts to sit together to address the problem.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturing and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Kutubuddin Ahmed said Bangladeshi missions abroad should play a significant role to find out new export market.

Among others, former advisor to the caretaker government Rokia A Rahman, Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) President Waliur Rahman, BEPZA Executive Chairman Brigadier General (ret) Mofizur Rahman, Bangladesh Jute Mills Association President NI Patwari took part in the discussion.



PHOTO: FICCI

Dietrich Andreas, German ambassador to Bangladesh, speaks at the monthly luncheon meeting of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) held at a city hotel on Sunday. FICCI President Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan and Secretary Jahangir Bin Alam and FICCI Vice-President M Nurul Islam are also seen.

Crowd fancies 3D cartoon films

Lack of knowledge stands in way to software fair success

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Although lack of knowledge about software remains a hurdle to the success of such fairs, 3D animation films are generating huge enthusiasm among the visitors.

People are finding it hard to believe that local software programmers have developed such three-dimensional cartoon films.

Software developers are also showing 2D/3D cartoon, pre-press graphics, multi-media authoring and Internet content development in the BASIS SoftExpo 2002 that began at Sheraton Hotel on Saturday.

Greenfield Toons, animation wing of The Decode Ltd, is showing its animation films -- 'Bugabuga' and 'Ants in the Pant' -- at the exhibition. Enthusiastic visitors are gathering at the stall.

"I can't believe that these films are made locally," said Fouzia, a student of Dhaka University.

The company has recently signed a 4.7 million-dollar project with a Canadian company to make a 26-episode cartoon.

Besides the three-dimensional cartoon, the fair is also displaying locally developed software that include banking, database publishing, hospitality and web page designing.

TechnoVista Ltd -- a Bangladeshi software company -- has developed a software application for Land O Lakes Inc of USA -- a project of US

based donor agency of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

This product is presently being implemented in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia. "It will be implemented in seven more countries including Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Philippines within the next one year," said TechnoVista Managing Director TIM Nurul Kabir.

They have also developed a 'Poster Design Software' for VKF Rangel GmbH of Germany. Kabir said according to the German company, the quality of our software was highly appreciated by many European countries and it will be one of the best selling software in Europe.

They have also developed a tailor-made application for Risk and Audit for global use by British American Tobacco and a workflow application on Training Database for the same company for its regional use.

Vista Apparels -- a complete application for the readymade garment industry -- and Vista Business -- an integrated application for large commercial organisations -- are two other popular software of the company.

Data Head Pvt Ltd brings accounting software, AccLine, this is a software on government payroll management system and LC management system.

EquipLine -- a software on

equipment maintenance cost, spares inventories and requisition management system -- and Bunon -- a software on purchase, production, inventory and sales management system for textile -- are two other software of the company.

The company has also developed a complete solution for publication houses, booksellers and distributors. It will also be used as document tracking and tracing system for postal and courier services.

DNS Software Ltd has developed a complicated enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. It has also developed Internet billing, telephone bill processing, doctors and patients database and many more systems.

Business Automation Limited has Tele Banking Solution -- a sophisticated solution to provide 24 hours client help-desk over telephone for modern banking services. They also have voice mail software, accounting software, inventory and production management for garments and human resources management software.

Fornix Soft Ltd has brought different multimedia CD made by them. These include English to Bangla talking dictionary, Bangla typing tutor, khokar shikkha vromon-mathematics and Bangladesh Encyclopedia.

The exhibition concludes at 6pm today.

New corporate banking head of HSBC



Adil Islam has taken over as Corporate Banking Head of HSBC Bangladesh, says a press release.

He will be managing corporate banking, institutional banking, payments & cash management and trade services.

Adil Islam worked with various multinational banks in the Middle East, the UK and Bangladesh. He did BA in Economics & Business Administration and MSc in International Banking & Financial Studies in the UK.



PHOTO: BANK ASIA

Syed Anisul Huq, managing director of Bank Asia Ltd, inaugurated a seven-day training course on "Banking Laws, Regulations & Practices" at the Principal Office of the bank on Thursday. Other senior officials of the bank and participants are also seen in the picture.

Dhaka Bank to offer no-interest credit card in Ramadan

Dhaka Bank will offer zero interest for its credit card holders during coming Ramadan, says a press release.

Under the programme, credit card holders will be able to shop at zero per cent interest.

Any purchases made during this period (1st Ramadhan to the Eid day) will not carry interest for additional 30 days, over and above the regular dates.

However, all other rules regarding the payment will be valid until further notice.

Dhaka Bank launched its credit card in October 2002. Available in both classic and gold card, this credit card is accepted across 2020 outlets.

Sheba Telecom distributors' night held

Sheba Telecom (Pvt.) Ltd organised a grand Distributors Night at Lagoon Convention Centre at Rifles Square in the city on Wednesday, says a press release.

Sheba Telecom organized a Dealer/Agent Shop Decoration Contest for a period of three months to increase the visibility of Sheba's product and building the brand image.

During that period dealers and agents of Sheba Telecom decorated their shops with their own initiative, creativity and enthusiasm, which created a festive look.

Sheba Telecom declared the winners of Dealer/Agent Shop Decoration Contest and also distributed the grand prizes. The first prize was Tk. 25,000 and 3 (three) Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka Air Tickets. The second prize was Tk. 20,000 and 2 (two) Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka Air Tickets. The third prize was cash Tk. 15,000 and 1 (one) Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka Air Ticket. Moreover, all dealers/agents who had participated in the contest and had fulfilled the terms and conditions also got consolation prize of Tk. 5,000 each.

Jefri Ahmad Tambi, MD & COO of Sheba Telecom (Pvt.) Ltd, was the chief guest on the occasion. Shakil Wahed, MD of Lipro Communications Ltd, Dilip E. Rozario, CFO of Deens Telecom Ltd., and Abu Sadat M. Sayem, head of Marketing of Sheba Telecom, were also present.

Recruiting agents warned against high migration charges

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam has warned recruiting agencies against high migration charges asking them to stop all irregularities in the manpower export.

Giving one month time for bringing discipline in the sector the minister said, "Otherwise, the government would go for tougher actions and it would not even hesitate to impose temporary ban on sending people to some countries where migration cost is several times higher than the official rates."

"We would be very strict and there would be no relaxation after the month of November," he said while addressing as chief guest at a round table discussion on the performance of expatriate ministry during the last ten months at a city hotel.

Referring to various anomalies in manpower export, the minister said there must be some improvement immediately and no complaint would be tolerated in the future.

Presided over by the secretary in charge of the ministry Dalil Uddin Mondal the round table discussion was participated by chairman of the editorial board of the Daily Ittefaq

Barrister Mainul Hosen, South Asian Regional Director of International Organisation for Migrants (IOM) Shahidul Haque, ILO representative Masud Hasan Siddiqui and Secretary General of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) Golam Mostafa.

Quamrul Islam said the migration cost in Saudi Arabia is very high because of trading of visa advice by a section of middlemen. He asked the recruiters not to pursue the employers and not to buy visa advice.

Then the migration cost would be reduced automatically, the minister observed.

In this connection, he said that Malaysia would open the market for Bangladeshi workers if the migration cost is reduced to less than 800 dollars.

The minister also responded to various questions raised by the journalists from different national dailies at the round table. BAIRA members and high government officials of the ministry and Bureau of Manpower Export and Training (BMET) were present.

The expatriate minister further said that the licenses of three recruiting agencies have been suspended and five persons were

arrested for their alleged involvement with illegal manpower export.

The government is also planning to cancel those recruiting licenses which would send less than 500 people abroad in a year, the minister said. Responding to a question he hoped that manpower export to some countries including Malaysia and South Korea would open very soon.

But Quamrul Islam said to maintain the country's image abroad, this time the government will not allow manpower export to a country more than the quota given by the government.

Barrister Mainul Hosen observed that the main diplomacy of our missions abroad should be to bring investment, increase trade and look after the welfare of the workers abroad. Terming the overseas workers as valuable assets for the country, he stressed the need for extensive training programmes in order to increase their skills.

In this regard, he underscored the need for exclusive English language training which would help increase overseas employment.

Dalil Uddin Mondal said around four million Bangladeshis are living abroad and they are sending more than two billion dollars remittance annually. The flow of remittance has

increased by 49 per cent in the first ten months of this year. According to him, a total of Tk 10,879.51 crore came as remittance during the period.

BAIRA secretary general urged for a crash programme to bring discipline in the manpower export sector. He observed that the migration cost in the Middle East countries went up because of an unhealthy competition among the recruiters.

He said BAIRA would extend all out co-operation to the government if it wants to abolish middlemen system and reduce migration costs. He however contradicted the view of the minister that the recruiting license should be canceled if a recruiter sends less than 500 people abroad in a year.

He said the lowest limit of overseas employment for a recruiter should not be more than one hundred.

IOM regional director thanked the government for setting up a separate ministry for the welfare of the expatriates which, according to him, is unique in third world countries.

Khosru wants TUs to help ensure cross-border labour movements

UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said trade union leaders should play an effective role in international forums, including WTO, to ensure free labour movements across the globe.

"Globalisation is now a reality, so we will have to turn the challenge of globalisation into an opportunity," he said inaugurating a two-day seminar on "Globalisation and Workers' Education" at the BIAM auditorium.

The International Federation of Workers Education Associations (IFWEA) and the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS)

have jointly organised the seminar attended by labour leaders from India, Pakistan and host Bangladesh.

Following the two-day deliberations the seminar will formulate a strategy to face the challenges of globalisation as well as determine role of trade unionism in relation to life and livelihoods of the labourers.

Trade unionists are making a strong plea for free labour movements in keeping with the free market economy that grants free flow of other factors of production -- capital, technology, trade and so.

The Minister said to face the challenges of the globalisation the workers would have to be educated

and conscious. Contribution of LDCs to world trade is only 0.4 per cent, he pointed out.

He noted that on the one hand multilateral free access was being assured and on the other exports from LDCs were being obstructed by imposing various tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Khosru said the workers were not getting jobs in the country and not even getting the scope for going to other countries for work. To solve such problems all will have to work together, he suggested.

The Commerce Minister said after the globalisation of commerce and investment it is not possible for a country to "go alone". So the

workers will have to attain world standards.

He also underscored the need for effort to secure the interests of the labourers in different world policymaking bodies through regular interaction with the policymakers.

BLS Chairman Ahsanullah Master MP, labour leader Nazrul Islam Khan, IFWEA acting secretary general Aslak Leesland, Asia-Pacific region coordinator Marlon Quesada and Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Workers Federation secretary general Joyal Abedin also spoke at the inaugural function.

Islami Bank opens new branch at Cox's Bazar

Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited has opened a new branch at Haji Shafiq Shopping Centre at Eidgaon in Cox's Bazar, says a press release.

With this, the total number of branches of the bank stands at 125.

Mohammad Mosharrar Hussain, MP, and director of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, was the chief guest on the occasion on Sunday.

Engineer Muhammad Dawood Khan, director of the bank, presided over the function.

Abdur Raquib, executive president, Md Shamsul Haque, executive vice president and Incharge of Chittagong Zone of the bank, also addressed the function.



PHOTO: IBBL

Mohammad Mosharrar Hossain MP, director of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, inaugurates the bank's Eidgaon Branch at Haji Shafiq Shopping Centre in Cox's Bazar on Sunday.