

Star BUSINESS

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Separate bank for RMG sector sought

Bribery still remains hurdle: BGMEA outgoing chief

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

A separate bank is needed to facilitate apparel-related export-import process, which would contribute to the rise in ready made garments (RMG) exports, observed the outgoing chief of the apex trade body for the sector.

"If hassle-free export is ensured, the country will soon be able to fetch \$15 billion from the RMG sector whereas the present earning is \$8 billion," S M Fazul Hoque said yesterday at a luncheon meeting at Hotel Sonargaon where he narrated to the media people the experiences he gathered during his around one-

year tenure as the president of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

The newly elected office bearers of the BGMEA for the 2006-07 term will formally take over charges within the next week.

The outgoing leader of the RMG makers alleged that bribery by a certain quarter of customs officials remains as a major hurdle to smooth business of the sector.

Although the present government has cracked down on corruption, bribery is yet to be stopped completely in the customs and port offices, Hoque said, adding that

rather the corrupt officials has resorted to a new tactic to charge the exporters a certain amount of money as bribe, which is now made payable either in their houses or at some other secret places.

He said, "This new tactic has been in force for the last two months."

"As a whole, we are falling in a new risk to export our goods to the international market," Hoque lamented, pointing his finger to such bribery.

Vice Presidents Md Lutfar Rahman Matin and Md Sirajul Islam were also present at the function.

TRIPARTITE DEAL ON RMG

Proper implementation demanded

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Different NGOs, research organisations and trade unions of the RMG sector yesterday called on the authorities concerned to implement properly and immediately the tripartite agreement signed last year by the government, workers and owners of readymade garment factories.

Make Trade Fair (MTF) Alliance, a platform of non-government organisations (NGOs), and other research organisations and trade unions also demanded appropriate implementation of the labour law formulated last year.

They pressed home the demands at a press conference in Dhaka, saying many a factories still do not comply with the labour law properly.

Although a labour law was formulated and a minimum wage was announced for the RMG workers as per the tripartite agreement, the deal is hardly followed in the factories, said Shirin Akter, president of Karmojibi Nari, an organisation of the working women.

"We have conducted a survey on 20 factories but found slight implementation of the agreement in some factories," she said.

Ten factories among the 20 are providing maternity leave according to the agreement while eight factories do not offer the facility, she said, adding that four factories are providing weekly holiday, while the rest 16 are not doing it.

Labour unrest is rising in some areas due to non-implementation of the agreement, said Executive Director of Karmojibi Nari Rokeya Rafiq.



Tech Valley Chief Operating Officer Asif Mahmud speaks at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday marking the installation of Sun Microsystems servers. General Manager Mamnoon Rashid Shamim and Sun Microsystems Channels Director Alex Tay are also seen.

India offers to share energy technology

Saarc energy ministers meet in Delhi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday offered to share its technologies with other Saarc countries in energy sector projects, particularly in renewable energy segment and suggested country-to-country electricity grid interconnections for free flow of power across the region.

"India has a well-developed energy sector. A large number of our projects and entities can compete with the best in the world. We are in a position to share the state-of-the-art technologies in the energy sector with our neighbours in the region", Indian Power Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said.

Inaugurating the Saarc Energy Ministers' Conference here, he said sharing best practices in proven technologies could be considered in harnessing renewable sources of energy and promoting energy-efficient programmes.

Shinde said Saarc must accelerate its efforts for development of natural gas pipelines within the region and also from outside the region in view of South Asia's heavy dependence on oil and gas import to meet its energy needs.

He said developing electricity grid connectivity is an essential step for exploitation of energy resources particularly in hydro power sector.

India has operational grid inter-

connections with Nepal and Bhutan

and technical studies are underway on feasibility of similar arrangements with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Shinde said.

He said development of hydropower in Saarc has been identified as one of the high priority areas because this has the potential of meeting the energy needs of the region in a cost effective and sustainable manner.

Shinde stressed the need for inviting private investment in energy sector. "We need to work for facilitating private investments in energy projects", he said.

Bangladesh's Energy Advisor Tapan Chowdhury attended the conference among other ministers from the region.

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